ELECTION 2016, 6 | SLICE OF LIFE, 30 | EDUCATION, 33

newington LIFE

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Still speaking

Sarah Gallardo continues to battle domestic violence

See story on page 4

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"It was chance to grow, learn new skills, earn badges. We loved camping; it was one of the highlights of the year, especially as we got older." - *Janet Machol*

See story page 18

ON THE COVER

Sarah Gallardo is a domestic abuse survivor who has started a nonprofit called Sarah Speaks Up as an effort to educate and help people.

Photo by Lisa Brissson
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Fighting domestic violence

Sarah Gallardo hopes to link victims with veterans

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Sarah Gallardo of Newington senses a potential bond between military veterans and victims of domestic violence. It's one of her primary initiatives in the battle to help women who have suffered physical abuse at the hands of others.

When Newington LIFE first wrote about Gallardo this past year, she had just formed a nonprofit organization called Sarah Speaks Up. Since then, she has begun to raise money and created a board of directors to help in her quest to do whatever she can for women like her who have been beaten by husbands, boyfriends or other people close to them.

"The nonprofit is officially a year old. It's going very well," she said.

She and her board determined that the best course of action is to establish one particular program and focus on getting it up and running. She calls that new initiative Veterans for Victims.

The premise is that military veterans, many of whom want to continue to serve in some fashion despite their own challenges, would escort victims to and from court. Gallardo was a volunteer victim advocate for a while and saw how helpful this companionship was to women fresh from dealing with violence.

She also said that court advocates are stretched thin and cannot serve everyone who needs their services. Gallardo herself recently attended a parole hearing for her former husband, the man responsible for her abuse.

She said that even though they were in different locations and she was watching the proceedings on television, she still started to shake and become emotionally agitated at the mere sight of him and the sound of his voice.

He got out of jail briefly, only to commit another such crime, and is now back behind bars, she said. That's when she thought of asking veterans to help her out, believing that they would best understand what these women are feeling.

"They are the other group of people in our community who have the highest rate of PTSD (post-traumatic stress syndrome). It seems like a natural connection," she said.

Sarah Speaks Up will hold a fund-raising event from 6-9 p.m. Oct. 22 at the Library Wine Bar and Bistro, 60 North Main St., Wallingford. Tickets are $75 and guests will enjoy fruit and cheese, passed hors d'oeuvres, a pasta bowl, beer and wine.

Gallardo spoke about where she is in her own personal recovery.

"I'm doing well. The process of healthy relationships after domestic violence can be daunting to consider. I know that I've learned quite a lot. It's an exciting time," she said.

Photo by Mark Jahne

Sarah Gallardo founded the nonprofit organization Sarah Speaks Up.

"I've had to make a conscious choice to try again. The victory is in continuing to try and grow. It's not easy. You have to not give up on yourself and always try for happiness," she added.

"Domestic violence isn't who I am, it's what happened to me. The nonprofit gave me a direction and a focus. It gave me something positive that I needed."

Gallardo has a 9-year-old daughter and the child is the source of great joy in her mother's world. The girl does not have much history with her father.

"I have been the only parent pretty much her entire life," Gallardo said.

> **“The victory is in continuing to try and grow. It’s not easy.”**
>
> **Sarah Gallardo**

Gallardo is also in the process of writing a book and enjoys crafting poetry.

Kathleen Oyanadel is president of the board of directors of Sarah Speaks Up. She is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force who teaches self-defense to women and was herself a victim of domestic violence in her prior marriage.

Oyanadel holds a second-degree black belt in tae kwon do. She is also involved with Soroptimists International of Farmington Valley. Soroptimist International is the world’s largest classified service organization for executive and professional women and is dedicated to improving the lives of girls and women.

“She was our Women’s Opportunity Award winner a couple of years ago,” she said of Gallardo, who has since joined the organization and serves as a vice president.

“We got to know each other better and I met her daughter,” Oyanadel said. “When she told me about Veterans for Victims, I was totally on board.”

The first task is to raise money to pay the veterans for their time when they escort women to court.

“The money we raise is going to go to that,” Oyanadel said.

She praised Gallardo for not just supporting, but doing whatever she can to get these traumatized women the help they need. **NL**

To learn more visit sarahspeaksup.org or look up the organization on Facebook.

The Choice

As little Sarah played with her dolls in the shade,
She never gave the mommy cuts and bruises.
When she grew up big and strong her Prince Charming came along
And she learned that every game they played, she loses.
The smiles turned to shouting,
Holding hands to flying fists.
And every day another piece of Sarah was dismissed.

Split lip.
Broken nose.
The love she had for him the greatest weapon that he chose.
Until the day he shot at her,
A nearly fatal miss.
She believed that she deserved it, that her life would end like this.
A hollow shell of skin and fear,
Not a human any more.
The exit in her mind now,
All while staring at the door.
Her power stripped, her spirit tattered.
Every day she’d cry.
Hopeless and confused, left wishing she would die.

Any hope that she’d get out alive belonged to someone else.
An outstretched hand, a call on the phone,
To tell her that she’s not alone.

A choice.
To stay and throw her life away or leave for the unknown.

A glimmer,
A sparkle.
Like a single firefly,
On its way to join the others and illuminate the sky.
Her hope, at first so slightly, swayed amidst the wind.
Now a fire burning brightly, day and nightly from within.
Her eyes open, let the hope in,
So she finally could look.
And write tomorrow, less the sorrow,
Another chapter in her book.

–Sarah Gallardo

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CAMPAIGN 2016

It's round two between Paul Doyle and Earle Roberts

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Much of the attention this campaign season has been focused upon the presidential election, but voters will also be asked to make their selections for the U.S. Senate and Congress. Also on the ballot are seats in the state legislature.

The state's 9th Senate District includes Cromwell, Newington, Rocky Hill and part of Wethersfield and Middletown. The contestants are the same as they were in the 2014 election, incumbent Democrat Paul Doyle of Wethersfield and Republican challenger Earle Roberts of Middletown.

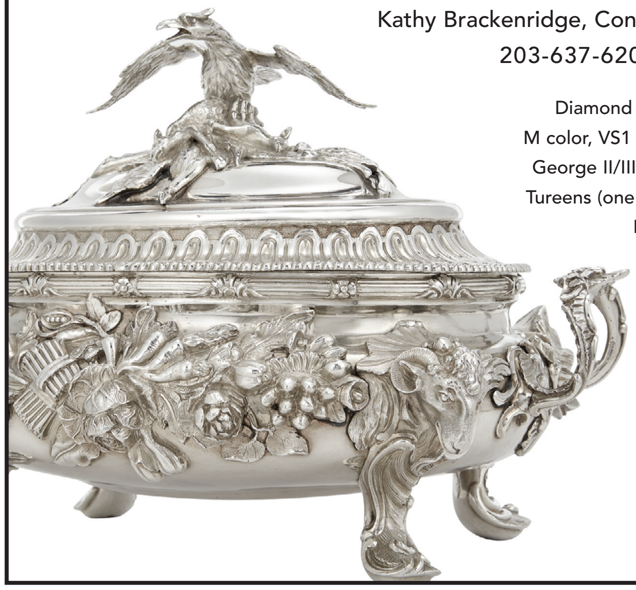
Newington LIFE asked both of the candidates to fill out a short questionnaire with a maximum word limit of 500 words. Here are their responses.

Paul Doyle
Democrat

Q. How do you provide necessary state services while also trying to control expenses?

A. Unfortunately, it is clear that the state budget crisis will continue into the future. We need to prioritize state expenditures by focusing on providing support for our needy citizens and cutting non-essential spending in other areas of the budget.

Although this will not be easy, we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need to make these difficult decisions to improve the future for Connecticut. Many of you will not like these difficult spending cuts, but Connecticut's budget picture remains bleak because of persistent reduced revenue.

Q. What are the most important issues facing the state, and what would you do about them?

A. State Budget Crisis: We need to get the state's fiscal house in order and prioritize state spending as detailed above.

Preserve and Create New Jobs: We need to pass legislation that seeks to improve Connecticut's economic climate, with the goal of attracting new businesses and expanding our existing businesses – job creation. With a focus on small businesses, we will need to target our state economic development dollars to industries that are committed to staying in Connecticut and producing new jobs.

Minimize Property Tax Increases: As a state legislator, I have always fought to maximize state aid to municipalities to minimize property tax increases and I will continue to do so if I am re-elected.

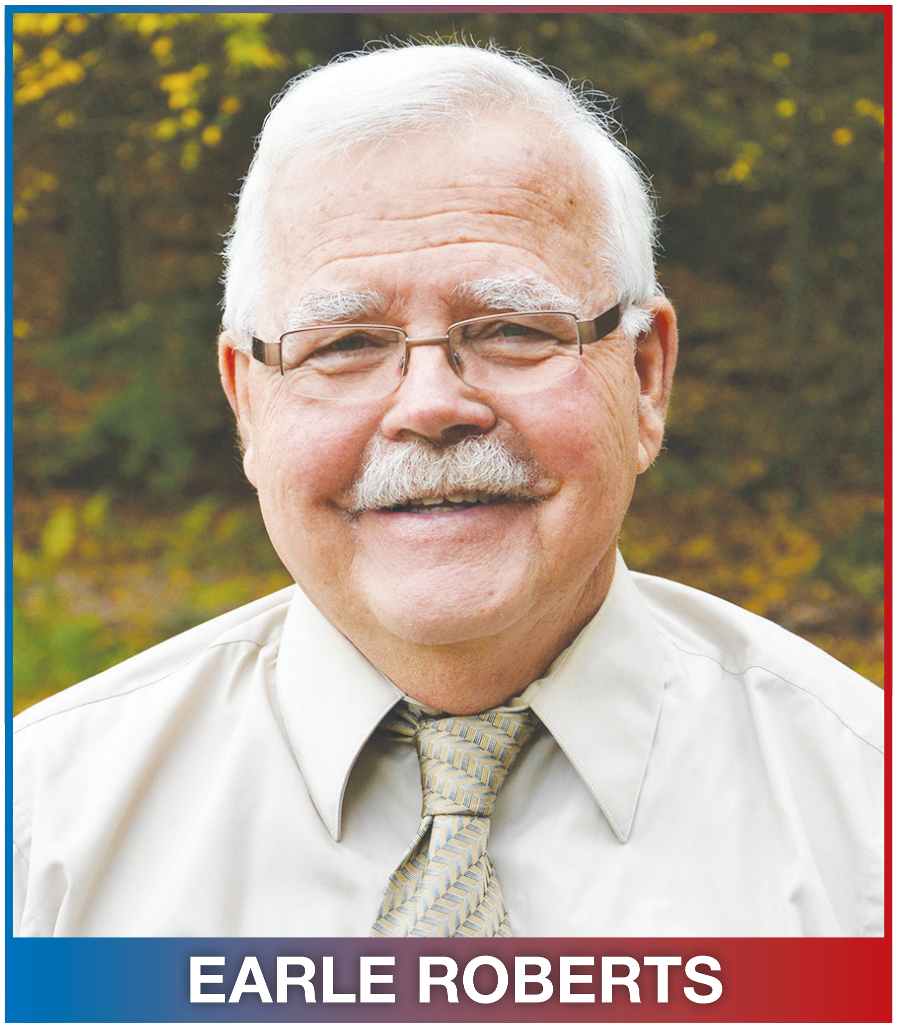
Q. What changes in policy do you think are needed to improve the quality of state government?

A. We need to provide more public input in the entire state budget creation process. Early in the legislative session, the Appropriations Committee has lengthy public hearings on the budget.

However, many decisions are made late in the session behind closed doors that do not give the public the opportunity to consider and comment on. We need to provide more public input in the later stages of the budget creation process.

Q. Is there any other information you would like to share with voters about your personal or professional qualifications, background, community involvement?

A. I have been a public servant as a Wethersfield Town Councilor, a state representative and now as a state senator. It has been my privilege and pleasure to participate in government service and I think my



Courtesy photos

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-Gary Byron

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GARY'S TRACK RECORD - FIRST TERM:

JOBS

- Voted to keep Sikorsky in CT to save jobs for Newington's major Sikorsky vendors, which are some of Newington's largest tax payers and employers.
- Founded the Small Business Advisory Board (meets first Tuesday of every month)
- Co-Sponsored An Act Supporting Veteran owned small businesses.
- Supported An Act Concerning Entrepreneur Learners Permit, which targets Bio Tech, Green Tech, and Information Technology.
- Supports CBIA Workforce Development to build a skilled, knowledgeable workforce in Connecticut.

BUDGET

- Voted against BOTH of Governor Malloy's Tax Increase Budgets
- Proposed HB-5021 to eliminate taxes on pensions and social security.
- We need to stop borrowing and the budget needs to be balanced without a tax increase.
- Will not support any new tax increases.

EDUCATION

- Fought for more local control for teachers and parents to educate our kids and less influence by state and federal bureaucrats.
- Focus on partnering job providers with our students curriculum to ensure our graduates have the skills that are in demand and needed to thrive.
- Proposed 4 year tax holiday for new college or graduates from accredited institutions to defray the cost of student loans.

HUMANITIES

- Award Winning Legislator for passing a bill to help those with mental illness.
- Passed a bill to toughen animal cruelty laws.
- Co-Sponsored and strongly supported legislation to require coverage for 3-D imaging (Tomosynthesis) breast cancer screening for all women in CT.
- Fought for legislation to strengthen human trafficking laws.
- Co-sponsored legislation to provide cancer coverage for CT Firefighters.
- Strong Advocate for those with Intellectual and Developmentally Disabilities and their families

OPEN SPACE

- Killed Governor Malloy's HB-6851 and SB-19 Eminent Domain bills to protect the property owner's rights from within 1/2 mile radius of CT FasTrak.
- Active member of Save Mill Pond.
- Staunch supporter of preserving open space.

TAXES

- Opposed any new taxes. No New Taxes!
- Proposed HB-5021 to eliminate taxes on pensions and social security.
- Regionalism: All for saving money but not for saving Hartford with Newington's money.
- Opposed SB-1 that sent our car taxes to Hartford.

WHAT GARY BYRON WILL DO IN HIS SECOND TERM:

- Support a Real Balanced Budget. No more borrowing! No more Taxes.
- Reintroduce my bill to eliminate taxes on pensions and social security
- Oppose the Mileage Tax.
- Continue to oppose any new tax increase
- Proposed 4 year tax holiday for new college or graduates from accredited institutions to defray the cost of student loans.
- Restore Newington's municipal aid and Educational Cost Sharing that Gov. Malloy slashed.
- Protect our senior citizens from fraudulent scams and more onerous taxes.
- Serve all the people of Newington.
- Continue to fight and kill any bill that allows the State to use eminent domain for CT FasTrak Transit Oriented Development.
- Focus on partnering job providers with our students curriculum to ensure our graduates have the skills that are in demand and needed to thrive.
- Community- Continue to produce town forums on state topics that greatly affect our community
- Helping Veterans - Continue to stand up to bureaucrats who get in the way of the services and treatment our veterans are owed.
- Continue my strong advocacy for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Will continue to hold office hours at a Newington coffee shop to meet with constituents in person.

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experience has helped me effectively serve as the state senator from the 9th District.

I ask the citizens in Cromwell, Middletown, Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield to support me on Nov. 8. I promise you that I will work hard, be accessible, and use common sense in my decisions.

Earle Roberts

Republican

Q. How do you provide necessary state services while also trying to control expenses?

A. The budget should be reexamined and significant cuts should be made in areas where money is being wasted. Ideally, I feel there should be an 8 percent cut in the state budget by reducing working hours for state employees and consolidation of resources where possible.

Resources should provide the people of Connecticut the services they need by spending money more wisely where it counts most and holding those responsible for the utilization of necessary resources accountable for money spent that cannot be adequately justified as being necessary to the operations of the state and its residents.

Q. What are the most important issues facing the state, and what would you do about them?

A. Some of the most important issues facing the state right now are keeping businesses in Connecticut and creating more employment opportunities in all areas. I would support making the state more business friendly by lowering corporate taxes and decreasing government oversight where it is not absolutely essential.

However, I do not support corporate welfare. Drawing more businesses, college graduates.

Q. What changes in policy do you think are needed to improve the quality of state government?

A. Having a serious discussion with all state unions to reach an agreement that will cut down on wasteful spending/change union laws to better benefit the people of Connecticut and make government more efficient without taking away the protections employees need.

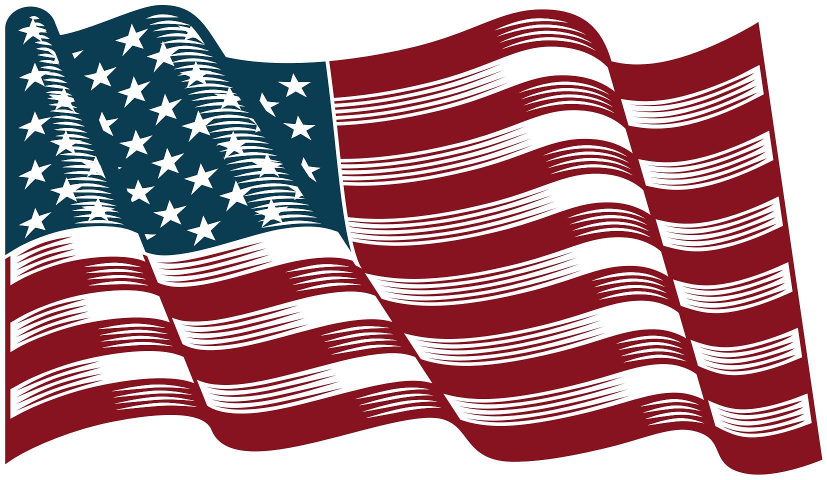
Q. Is there any other information you would like to share with voters about your personal or professional qualifications, background, community involvement?

A. I am a self-employed tool and die maker and a graduate of Middletown High School and the University of Hartford. I served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam era from 1964-1967 and was honorably discharged.

As a lifelong resident of Connecticut, I care a great deal about the future of Connecticut and am currently concerned about many issues that have an impact on each resident. One of my biggest concerns is the current deficit of $1.3 billion and how we can work to change the system that is perpetuating it.

We need to take a close look at where and how funds are being allocated, focus on consolidating public services, departments and resources, and eliminate wasteful spending and practices, where possible.

Civic involvement has always been a priority for me. In Middletown, I previously served on the Common Council and was chairman of the South Fire District, as well as serving on various town committees and commissions. **NL**



GARY BYRON

CAMPAIGN 2016

Shulman challenges Byron in the 27th Assembly District

JOSHUA SHULMAN

Courtesy photos

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The race in the 27th Assembly District, which covers more than half of Newington, is between Republican incumbent Gary Byron and Democratic challenger Joshua Shulman, who currently serves on the Board of Education. Byron won the open seat two years ago after the retirement from politics of longtime state representative Sandy Nafis.

Newington LIFE asked both of the candidates to fill out a short questionnaire with a maximum word limit of 500 words. Here are their responses.

Gary Byron
Republican

Q. How would you provide necessary state services while also trying to control expenses?

A. Reducing borrowing. We are using the state credit card too much right now, particularly on special interest projects, even awarding over $680 million in bonding just last month alone. So re-prioritizing state bonding projects to what are necessary expenses is essential. For me it's infrastructure, job growth, and helping our state's most vulnerable citizens.

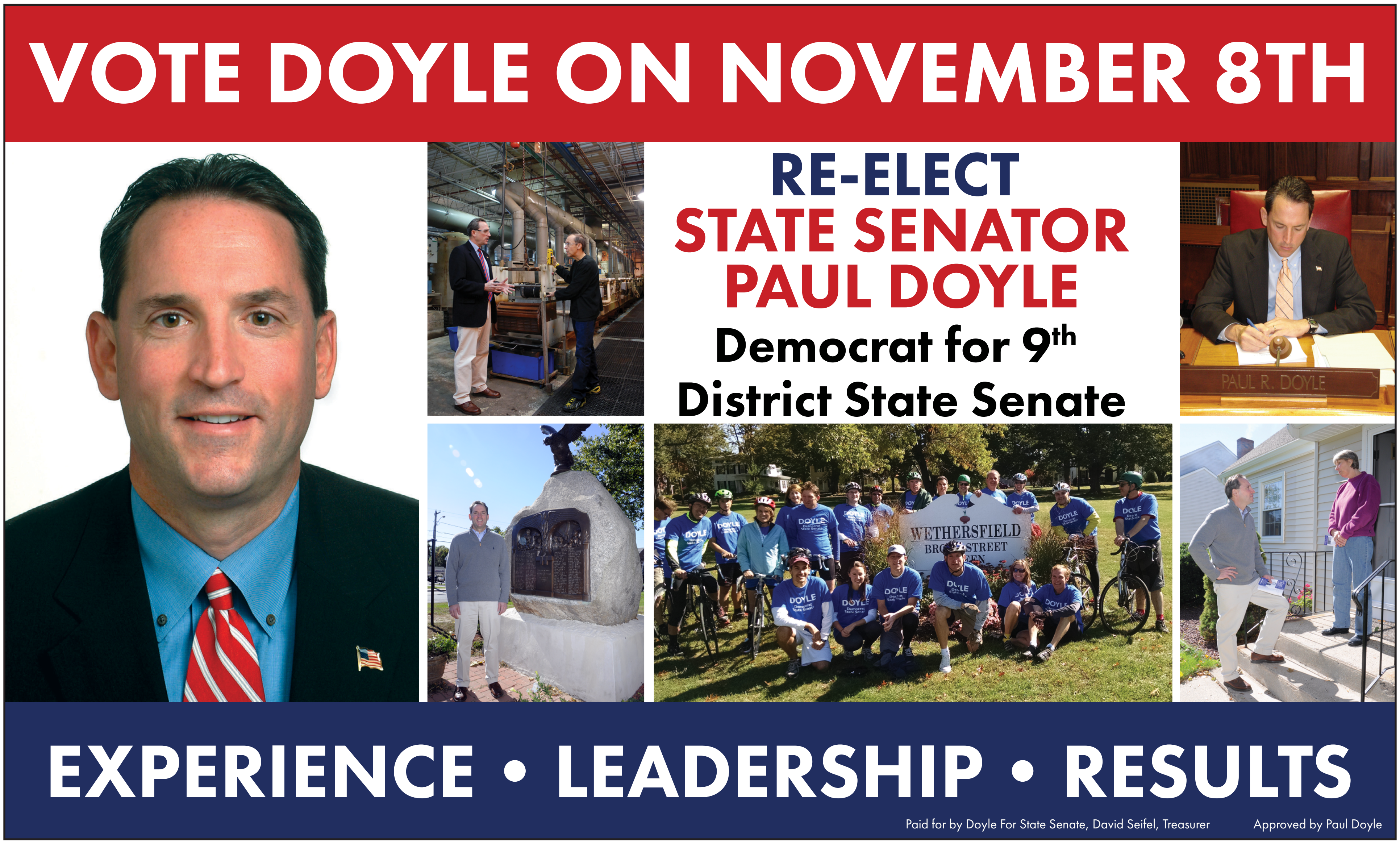
Reducing fraud and waste. We do this by finding savings through fraud prevention in the Earned Income Tax Credit program. In addition, cut Medicaid costs by eradicating abuse of taxpayer funds.

Reducing discretionary spending. We must re-prioritize spending on non-entitlement programs and not balance the budget on the backs of our state's most vulnerable citizens, the elderly and disabled.

Q. What are the most important issues facing the state, and what would you do about them?

A. The most important issues are jobs, the budget/taxes, and education. Regarding jobs, it is important that we create a friendly business climate while promoting sound education to train our youth for the jobs of tomorrow.

Regarding the state budget/taxes, we've lost many well-paying jobs since the start of the recession, which is continuing to lead to mounting deficits with our budget. We need to do everything we can to bring back well-paying jobs to the



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state instead of the low-wage work that is currently in place.

This is why I support growth in industries such as advanced manufacturing, an industry where average annual salary ranges between $38,000 to $74,000.

Regarding education, demand for these skills has exploded due to our state's aging workforce. We need to get our youth interested in these growth industries and that starts with getting our students engaged from early on.

Q. What changes in policy do you think are needed to improve the quality of state government?

A. More transparency. Our citizens too often are caught by surprise when a new law is passed. This is because bills are not always fully vetted and given a public hearing where citizens can have input. We need to start using the implementer process for what is meant, implementing the budget.

Keeping our word. Governor Malloy and the majority party leadership have made a mockery of our democratic process by continuing to not keep their promises. Governor Malloy has twice promised there would be no tax increases, only to pass the two highest increases in state history.

Additionally, he has denied the existence of budget deficits during campaigns only then to "realize" that we are in significant deficits that were projected months prior.

Making the state work for business again. That includes less taxes and lowering the regulatory burden on our businesses, big and small, to promote sound growth in the state and keeping our jobs here.

Q. Is there any other information you would like to share with voters about your personal or professional qualifications, background, community involvement?

A. I am a lifelong Newington resident and 28-year Newington small business owner. I have also been a volunteer for NCTV for the last 15 years.

I have tirelessly fought for Newington from my active role in saving Mill Pond Park to my legislative accomplishments of defeating a broad eminent domain bill that would have put Newington at risk of state overreach. I was also selected as co-legislator of the year by the North Central Mental Health Board for my work with the disabled.

Joshua Shulman

Democrat

Q. How would you provide necessary state services while also trying to control expenses?

A. Controlling expenses starts with managing future obligations. Right now, our unfunded pension obligations are being funded with balloon payments after years of mismanagement.

We can start by smoothing out the payments now. We also need to restrict surplus money that comes in with quarterly tax filers to make sure we build a good reserve to protect our taxpayers from slow growth.

By controlling expenses and building reserves, it becomes easier to provide services. We need to treat the state budget like a household budget: project low, save whenever we can and only borrow for investments that will earn money (or jobs) in the future.

Q. What are the most important issues facing the state, and what would you do about them?

A. Connecticut is in a never-ending budget crisis, over relies on property taxes to fund education and has an infrastructure badly in need of repair. These issues are not without solutions, though they require tough choices and follow through.

We need to pay down our unfunded pension obligations and start building our rainy day fund back up. Connecticut needs to stop funding local education with an overreliance on property taxes – it creates inequities and is harming our seniors on fixed incomes.

Newington is a prime example of a town that is underfunded by the state (20 percent of our budget is from the state; the statewide average is close to 50 percent) and without a growing grand list, so any increases in education spending impact property taxes directly. Our state is facing many challenges, but with good investments and fiscal discipline, we can rebound stronger than before.

Q. What changes in policy do you think are needed to improve the quality of state government?

A. The quality of our state government changes based on its goals. If we focus on middle class growth, addressing fiscal issues and investing in manufacturing and other growth sectors, the quality of our state government will improve exponentially.

I firmly believe Connecticut is a wonderful state and I am fortunate to have grown up here. By focusing on growing our middle class and investing in growth areas, the people of Connecticut will be better off.

Q. Is there any other information you would like to share with voters about your personal or professional qualifications, background, community involvement?

A. In the middle of law school I decided to fulfill a longtime goal and start giving back to the community that gave so much to me growing up. After five years on the Board of Education, I am proud of the relationships I have built and the innovative school system of which I am a part. We have made strides even with the lowest budget increases in over 20 years.

I am a practicing attorney at a general practice firm. I deal daily with middle class people from all over the state on consumer issues, estate planning, probate, real estate and other civil and criminal issues. My education and professional experiences have prepared me for the legislature.

I grew up in Newington, bought a house in Newington and am starting my married life in Newington. Our state and our town need more effective representation and more common sense. I hope to be part of the solution.

24th Assembly District

The 24th Assembly District, a primarily New Britain voting district, also covers a small piece of western Newington. The candidates for this seat are incumbent Democrat Rick Lopes and Republican James Sanders Jr. Lopes responded after the deadline and Saunders did not respond. **NL**

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CAMPAIGN 2016

Brown seeks to oust longtime incumbent Guerrera in the 29th Assembly District

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The 29th Assembly District covers all of Rocky Hill as well as portions of Newington and Wethersfield. This year's race is between longtime Democratic incumbent Antonio "Tony" Guerrera and Republican newcomer Todd Brown. Both men reside in Rocky Hill.

Newington LIFE asked both of the candidates to fill out a short questionnaire with a maximum word limit of 500 words. Here are their responses.

Antonio "Tony" Guerrera
Democrat

Q. How would you provide necessary state services while also trying to control expenses?

A. As legislators, we must consider the budget in its entirety and determine which state services are to be considered "essential." Then we must estimate the revenues the state will receive in the next fiscal year and allocate those revenues to essential state services.

If we find that estimated revenues will be inadequate to fund all the services we consider to be essential, it then becomes our responsibility to make difficult choices among reducing those "essential" services, increasing taxes, or some combination of the two. This is the most difficult challenge legislators face every year.

Q. What are the most important issues facing the state, and what would you do about them?

A. My priorities are, and always have been, extending the state's role in creating jobs, furthering economic development and focusing on essential support for education, the elderly, the disadvantaged and those with special needs.

In determining these priorities, I continue to listen carefully to the concerns of my constituents and to try to respond to them within the limits of available state resources.

Q. What changes in policy do you think are needed to improve the quality of state government?

A. These are not necessarily changes in policy, but I believe state government must make every effort to increase its use of technology to improve the efficiency of its programs and services and the effectiveness of their delivery to all citizens.

As chairman of the Transportation Committee, I'm especially committed to using available state resources to expand the use of public transportation and modernize our rail, bus, seaport, airport and highway infrastructure.

Q. Is there any other information you would like to share with voters about your personal or professional qualifications, background, community involvement?

A. In the 16 years I've served as state representative in the 29th District, I've tried to make sure that the interests and concerns of my constituents in these communities are first and foremost in the decisions I'm called on to make. At the same time, I've recognized that my decisions affect the entire state, and therefore I'm obligated to consider how the needs of my district can be measured against the needs of the state.

In the vast majority of legislative issues that come before us, those needs are very similar, and my decisions are pretty easy to make. In those rare instances where those needs are not the same, I've done my best to weigh the pros and cons, then make the decision I believe is right.

In weighing the alternatives, I rely on my experience as a self-employed businessman responsible for getting the job done on time and within budget. I also rely on the lessons I learned from my parents, who came to this country with almost no money, but with

TONY GUERRERA

a willingness to work hard and become contributing residents of the greatest country on earth.

Those lessons include faith in your own abilities, commitment to productive work, and dedication to doing what's right for the benefit of those closest to us. These are the lessons I pledge to continue carrying out if I'm fortunate enough once again to earn the trust of my district's voters.

Todd Brown

Republican

Q. How would you provide necessary state services while also trying to control expenses?

A. Four years ago, in different words than Governor Malloy used, I suggested block grants to the commissioners to allocate funding at their discretion. The legislature gets estimates on revenue, budgets to that number.

Give the commissioners the money with the instructions to get the most value with the money they have to work with. Watchdog groups and the press will make sure the money has been well allocated.

Q. What are the most important issues facing the state, and what would you do about them?

A. Two things, high taxes and out-of-control spending. High-income wage earners are leaving the state because of the tax burden. There should be no more tax increases and no more looking for new taxes, especially tolls or a mileage tax on our roads.

For too many years the state budget has been growing at a rate faster than inflation or wage growth. We have to stop the state budget from growing faster than revenues.

We have to stop borrowing money as a way to keep up the spending. The legislature needs to follow its own laws about the budget and spending. If we can make the state look affordable and stable, then business will want to be here without special incentives.

Q. What changes in policy do you think are needed to improve the quality of state government?

A. We need our government to stop spending beyond revenues and to wisely allocate money for the most impact. Certain tax revenues should be spent using common sense for what they fund.

Only 24 percent of the gas tax goes towards road repair and building, and yet we hear that we need tolls or a mileage tax to pay for our roads. Before passing a law for a lockbox for tolls we do not have, how about designating 100 percent of the gas tax revenue for roads?

When the CT Lottery was introduced, its revenue was supposed to go for education, and now the money goes into the general fund. Keep the promise and fund education with lottery money.

No more bloated projects like a $600 million busway between Hartford and New Britain. Portland, Maine, had 10 miles of rail track and rehabbed it for $30 million into a commuter rail line. Meanwhile, Connecticut ripped out the rail and replaced with road at 20 times the cost. Term limits and removal of state legislators from the pension plan. It is called government service and elected officials should not look for this part-time job to be a career. Ten years maximum.

TODD BROWN

Courtesy photos

Q. Is there any other information you would like to share with voters about your personal or professional qualifications, background, community involvement?

A. I serve on the Open Space Commission as a way to protect the outdoor resources of Rocky Hill. I live an active outdoor lifestyle. I can be seen in town running, kayaking and riding on an ElliptiGO.

I bring both thought and energy to the things I do. I love to talk, but also I am always ready to listen. I am a moderate and I do not view compromise as a dirty word. Together, we win. **NL**

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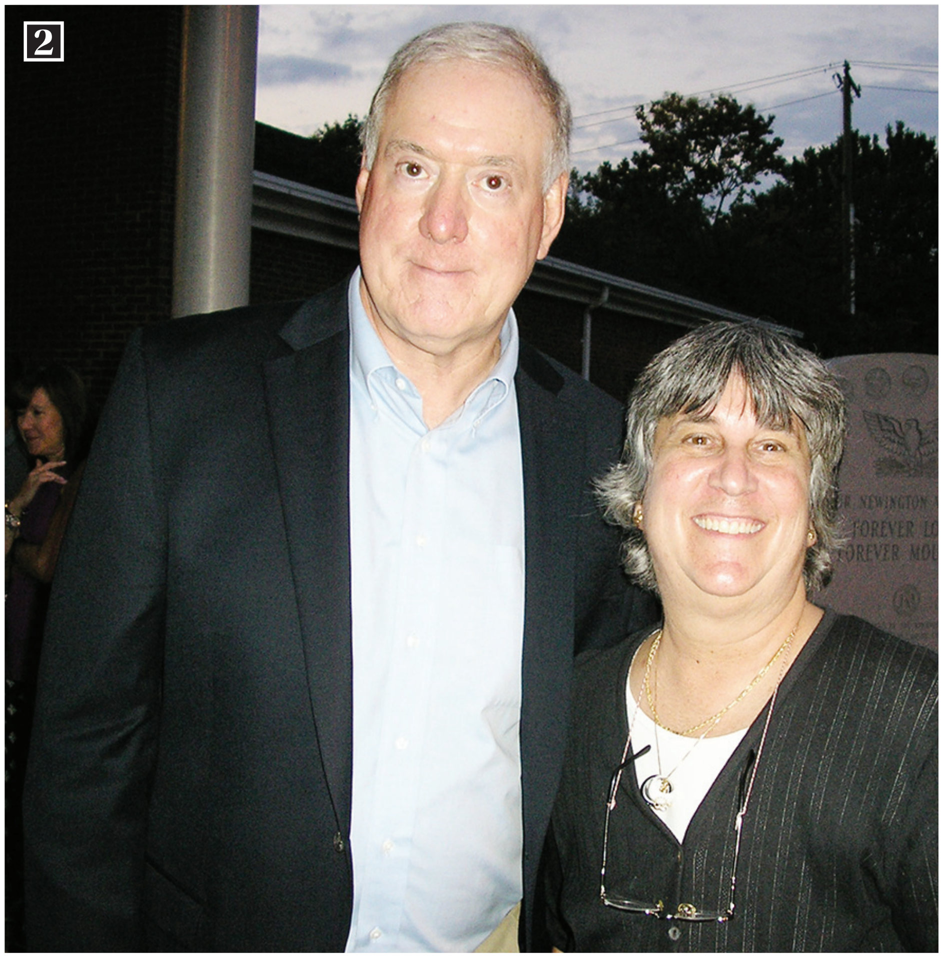
Newington Student Assistant Fund throws a party

photos by Mark Jahne



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1. Roger Eddy greets NSAF Treasurer Maura Stamm. 2. The Newington Student Assistance Fund held a party in the town hall lobby Sept. 23 to celebrate its 50th anniversary. President Terry Sullivan greets Vice President Jeri Lynn Turkowitz at the registration table. 3. Daniel Nahorney, board member Janet Nahorney, Sue Saucier and Ken Saucier enjoyed an evening of food and sampling the various wines and craft beers. 4. The Larry Gareau Trio provided live musical entertainment. 5.) Dean and Alisa Houldcroft greet Anna Eddy. The two women are members of the fund's board of directors.

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Healthtrax celebrates its renovations

photos by Mark Jahne

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CARDIOVASCULAR TRAINING

1. Healthtrax Fitness & Wellness held a gathering with the Newington Chamber of Commerce Sept. 26 to celebrate the recent expansion and renovation of its East Cedar Street facility. Chief Operating Officer Stephen Capezzone cuts the ribbon. 2. Healthtrax employees Virginia Gorski, left, and Marissa St. Pierre were in charge of spinning the prize wheel for their guests. 3. Among those who attended the event were, from left, chamber Immediate Past President Theresa Gogluicci, Executive Director Gail Whitney and Town Councilor Tim Manke. 4. Healthtrax official Jason O'Tash welcomes chamber member Robert Newbold to the festivities.

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Lively times at the library

1. Jesse from Mad Science demonstrated lightning, made butterbeer burps and other wizardly tasks to demonstrate the Science of Hogwarts. 2. Children make Quidditch Broom Goody Bags during a Harry Potter-inspired program at the library. 3. Colleen Whitman won an iPad mini in the Lucy Robbins Welles Library summer reading challenge. She is shown with her brother Daniel and librarian Rebecca Cobb. 4. Danica Fox won a Kindle thanks to the summer reading challenge.

courtesy photos

On Nov. 8th

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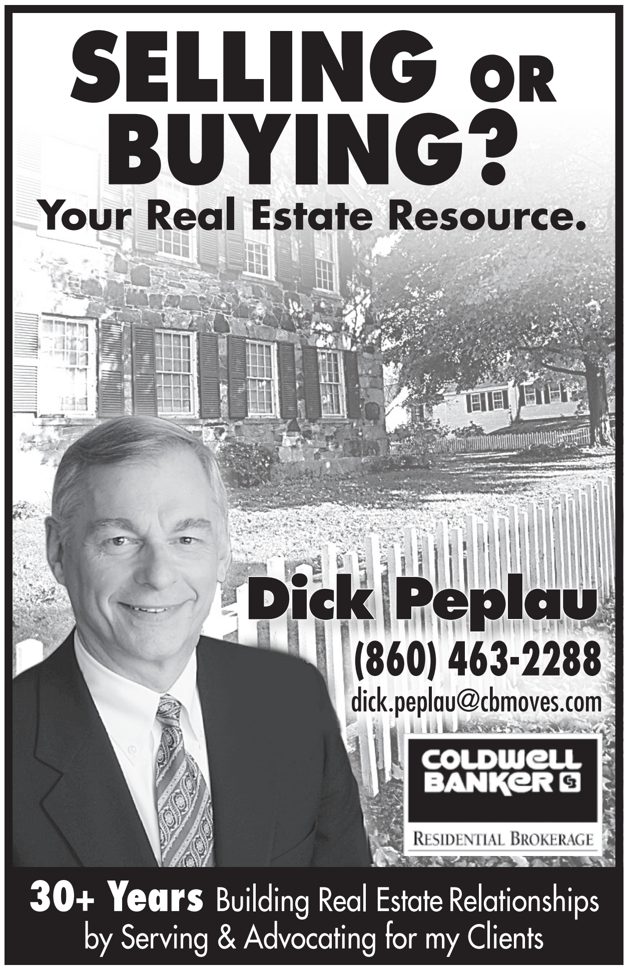

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A family tradition

Four generations celebrate a total of 277 years of involvement in Girl Scouts

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

Natalie (Child) Phillips joined the Girl Scouts in 1930. She was 7 years old at the time. Earlier this year she received an 85-year pin noting her continued involvement at the age of 93.

At that same ceremony, her daughter Janet Phillips Machol was recognized with a 60-year pin, and her granddaughter, Julie Machol Hughes, was given a 30-year pin. Phillip's great-daughter Hannah Hughes was awarded a five-year pin of her own.

Scouting is a way of life for these Newington or Farmington residents and they credit their time spent in Girl Scouts with helping them become strong, confident women who gained lifelong friends and valuable life skills.

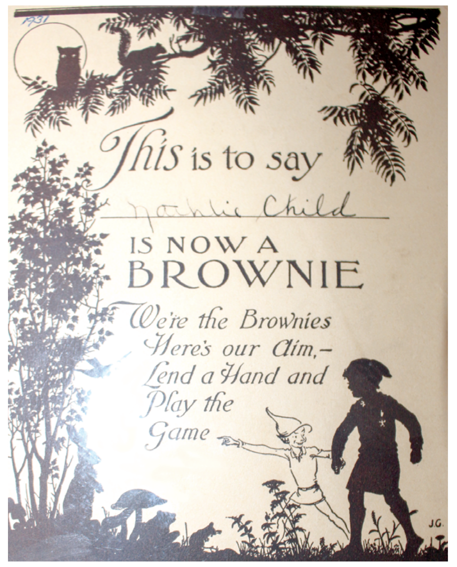
Phillips joined the organization because all of her friends were joining.

"It was the thing to do," she said, adding that her father had been a Boy Scout and later a deputy commissioner for that organization.

Her brother was in Boy Scouts and her mother had been a Girl Scout and became involved in Girl Scouts as an administrator, serving on the Girl Scout Council after Phillips became a Brownie.

"It's the natural course of events," Machol said. "You are born into it."

She added that her sister, Lois, was also a Girl Scout. Before she joined officially, she and her sister would accompany their mother to meetings in



This is to say
Natalie Child
IS NOW A
BROWNIE
We're the Brownies
Here's our Aim,–
Lend a Hand and
Play the
Game

Natalie (Child) Phillips got involved with Girl Scouts in 1930 at the age of 7 and has continued in the organization in one way or another for the past 85 years.

Photos by Alicia B. Smith

Natalie Phillips, seated, joined the Girl Scouts at the age of 7 and was recently recognized with an 85-year pin. Her daughter, Janet Machol, left, earned a 60-year pin, while her daughter Julie Hughes has been involved in scouting for 30 years and her daughter, Hannah Hughes, for five.

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> **“It was a chance to grow, learn new skills, earn badges. We loved camping; it was one of the highlights of the year, especially as we got older.”**
>
> **–Janet Machol**

the years when she served as a troop leader.

Phillips, who began her own troop at Broadview Community Church in Hartford at the age of 21, went on to serve as a senior troop leader for 25 years. She later worked with the organization doing camp training and mentored the first young women in Connecticut to earn their Gold Award.

She led several trips including excursions to Washington, D.C., and an eight-week adventure to Europe that included a visit to Our Chalet in Switzerland, one of five Girl Scout centers in the world.

“I didn’t sleep a wink,” Phillips said when she was asked to go to Europe.

She was working as an executive secretary at Bulkeley High School in Hartford and she was not sure if she could get the time off, but her principal said she could go.

“One of my dreams was to see the Girl Scout chalet,” she said.

When her Senior Girl Scout days were over, she was not ready to part company with the organization and became a leader, a role she held for 18 years.

“It was a chance to grow, learn new skills, earn badges, ” Machol said of scouting. “We loved camping; it was one of the highlights of the year, especially as we got older.”

Even while attending college, Machol stayed involved by volunteering to assist a troop in New Haven. After serving as a leader for 10 years and seeing her troop members earn their Silver Award, she went on to serve as a delegate at the annual Girl Scouts meeting and in other capacities.

It is difficult for Hughes to remember a time when Girl Scouts was not a part of her life. Like her grandmother, her own mother became a leader and would head up her troop in Newington.

“When Julie was born, the day of her birth, I was in the hospital and my mother and I said, ‘We have another Brownie,’” Machol said with a laugh.

Hughes would become the top cookie seller in Newington and the overall top seller in Girl Scouts. She earned her Silver Award in 1992.

Years later, when Hughes had a daughter, the same sentiment about another Girl Scout joining the family was shared. Hannah Hughes joined a Daisy troop in Farmington when she was 5 years old. She is now in Cadettes.

When Hughes first joined, her mother was the troop leader and her best friend’s mom was the assistant leader of the troop of about 20 girls. She stayed in Girl Scouts through high school; by then the troop had about five members.

None of them aspired to earn their Gold Award, the highest honor a Girl Scout can receive, but the troop decided to do one final project. Each girl gathered all the T-shirts they had accumulated through the years of scouting and made a quilt.

Hughes never finished hers, but her mother did and gave the completed quilt to her as a bridal shower gift. Several of those in attendance at the shower had been in her troop and the gift caused them to go on a trip down memory lane.

“I still have mine; its on my bed,” Hughes said.

Scouting has also been something that connects Hughes with her students at Farmington High School, helping them to know one another on a different level.

“It gives me another connection to my students,” she said.

“It is a sisterhood,” Machol added.

When Phillips received her 50-year pin her former troop leader, Gladys L. Gage, attended the ceremony. All the women have stories about cookies.

When Phillips was a scout, the cookies were homemade treats and

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> **"When I first started in scouting and saying the Girl Scout Pledge at every meeting, it started to become a part of the fabric of my life."**
>
> **–Janet Machol**

she knew the women who developed the recipe for the sugar cookies that her troop would sell to raise money. She still has that recipe.

Machol remembers when her daughter sold cookies and their dining room would be overrun with boxes. Hannah sells cookies now, too, with help from her grandmother and great-grandmother.

Recently, when Phillips was stepping out of her apartment at Avery Heights in Hartford, a neighbor yelled at her, "When are you selling cookies?"

"I was the top cookie seller in Newington," Hughes said proudly, noting that she sold more than 400 boxes one year back in the late 1980s.

"We love selling cookies," Machol said of this longtime tradition.

"And we love eating cookies," Hughes added.

The friendships that are forged during scouting often last long after they leave the organization. Phillips still hears from some of her former scouts and many of Hughes' best friends were in her troop.

While Girl Scouts are most often known for their cookie sales, they do many community service projects. Machol's troop once worked to get a pay phone installed in the center of Newington and made the first phone call to a girl who was unable to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony because she was ill.

Machol recalled that within days of the phone being installed she received a letter from a woman thanking her for the phone because she had car trouble and used it to call for help.

Another important element of scouting was camping. Phillips attended Camp Alice Merritt.

"I loved the swimming units. I love swimming," she said.

She was featured in a local newspaper in 1939 while at camp when she and a friend were learning bobbing, a skill that has people stand on a canoe and propel it without paddles. She has that clip in her scrapbook.

About two years ago she was invited back to the camp to see that same canoe after it had been found and refurbished. She put on a life jacket, hopped in and paddled away like a pro.

Machol also attended Camp Alice Merritt.

"I loved to do the outdoor cooking, hiking and swimming," she said, but added they were not enough to diminish her feelings of homesickness during her two-week stay.

Her first time attending camp, at Camp Timber Trails in Granville, Mass., Hughes was also homesick. Having a friend go with her the following year made a huge difference. She later trained to be a counselor.

Hannah said her first year at camp was especially fun because two of her friends were also there. She used her fire-making skills this summer when camping with her family.

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Badges scouts can earn have changed with the times.

'What's been nice is they do incorporate these things to keep it modern," Hughes said. "It's not like they are stuck in the past."

One of the issues that many troops face is finding volunteers to serve as troop leaders. Hughes said her schedule does not allow her to serve as a leader, but she assists her daughter's troop whenever she can.

They all credit scouting with giving them confidence in life.

"When I first started in scouting and saying the Girl Scout Pledge at every meeting, it started to become a part of the fabric of my life," Machol said.

Hughes appreciates the traditions and meaning behind what she learned. She remembers that meetings ended standing in a circle, holding hands and singing "Taps," then passing a squeeze from girl to girl around the circle.

"It was really nice when I went to go pick up Hannah and her troop was doing the same thing," she said.

Hannah's troop added another element; after the song and hand squeezes, the girls twist themselves around so, while still holding hands, the circle they formed now faces outwards. It serves as a symbol of bringing their pledge out to the larger community. **NL**

Natalie enjoying camping at Girl
Scout Camp Alice Merritt
(approx. 13 yrs. old)
(approx. 193
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Celebrating in the street

photos by Bob Newbold

The annual Newington Waterfall Festival was held Sept. 17 on Market Square. It featured the always popular chalk art in the street, dance performances and booths staffed by community organizations.

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Solving the case

Pooling resources helps five towns deal with serious car crashes

by Mark Jahne
Editor

It's difficult for small or mid-sized police departments to establish specialty units for various parts of their work. That requires time, money and manpower.

But combining forces enables them to greatly expand their capabilities and that's just what Berlin, Cromwell, Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield have done by creating a joint highly trained unit to investigate and reconstruct the most serious motor vehicle crashes.

The Mid-State Accident Reconstruction Squad consists of 12 officers from those five towns. They are on call day or night to respond when a crash results in a serious injury or fatality. Members successfully completed at least 120 hours of intensive training on this topic.

The squad is commanded by Lt. Robert Catania of Rocky Hill and Sgt. John Zematis of Newington. Its work is overseen by Newington Police Chief Stephen Clark.

He considers the unit a benefit to all of the participating towns. Clark cited the advantage of officers working together at crash scenes, dividing up the work and sharing their collective expertise.

"You want that interoperability with adjoining departments," he said. "The more you do it, the more experience you're going to get. As a group, they work very well together."

The Mid-State Accident Reconstruction Squad also participates in proactive events such as this drunken driver checkpoint held Sept. 8 in Rocky Hill. Officer Jeffrey Foss-Rugan, a member of the squad, gives a field sobriety test to a motorist who was stopped for erratic driving. The problem was determined to be medical in nature.

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Berlin Officer Ryan Gould, a member of the mid-state squad, sets up a portable light array at a DUI checkpoint in Rocky Hill.

Clark added that the thorough nature of the unit's work and the skill level of its members is also helpful when officers are summoned to testify in court cases related to those crashes.

Wethersfield Chief James Cetran is a strong supporter of the unit. Two of his officers are members of the squad.

"It's a huge value. No one department can do the training and have the equipment by itself. It's too much," he said.

"It's a win-win all around. It benefits all of us. They get very proficient at what they're doing because they get so much practice," he added.

"It's a great benefit for each of the towns. We're working as a team, coordinating, training together," Cromwell Police Chief Denise Lamontagne said.

"They all know their jobs and responsibilities. It alleviates a lot of questions," Lamontagne added. "We've had to use the mid-state reconstruction team twice in the last couple of months, as well as the major crime squad."

She said the cooperation between departments has almost become second nature. Being able to call upon the team also means that other local police assets remain free to handle other calls for service.

"In March of 2009, [retired] Chief Richard Mulhall of Newington began working on an idea in the capital region to form mid-state and metro teams" of specialized police officers, Catania said.

"This was part of a regionalization effort," Zematis added.

Not only did it provide a pool of highly trained personnel, but by going regional, the unit was able to acquire grant funding for its training. He said each town saves money and gets better service as a result.

That also drew the attention of specialized accident reconstruction schools around the country. Connecticut officers used to have to travel to Florida to access the closest training classes. Now those programs come here.

"By May of 2009, our first reconstructionists were trained," Catania said. "Rocky Hill and Newington have a huge commitment in the unit. Cromwell, for a small town, has a very good commitment to the team."

They use a variety of equipment including surveying tools and computerized devices. Members of the team have special uniforms and protective winter gear.

They also have access to a command vehicle that carries additional equipment and can be used as an onsite testing facility for drivers who may be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.

"As technology continues to advance, it becomes essential to reconstruct these accidents. By the time we get involved, it's more of an investigative scene," Zematis said.

"Accident investigation is a completely different animal than most of the stuff we do in daily police work. Everything we do is methodical. There is a sequence to it."

Catania said some of the early cases took as long as a year to resolve. Now most investigations are completed in a couple of months.

"We roll out so often now, we have to get them done," he said. "We have advanced photography equipment. We've been using a lot more video."

He estimated that the unit is called upon at least twice a month. Sometimes its members are on regular duty and they can respond to the crash site immediately. Otherwise patrol supervisors in each town are entrusted with knowing when to call the unit and its expertise to the scene.

"Any time of the day or night, they call me and tell me what they have. I try to get there first to assess what we need and call out the guys. John and I split the supervisory responsibilities," Catania said.

"The cooperation is excellent. We have never had an issue rolling into another town," he added.

He alerts squad members by text message and they respond to the location as soon as possible. In the meantime, on-duty patrol officers are handling traffic control and dealing with any injured people.

"Seventy percent of our accidents are between Friday and Sunday and they're mostly after midnight," Zematis said.

"Everything we go to is horrendous," Catania added.

"The biggest advantage has been in the use of CDR systems," Zematis said. "It allows us to validate some of the numbers we get through the reconstruction."

CDR stands for crash data recorder. Every car built in America since 2012, and many imported from overseas, has such a device, similar to the black boxes on airplanes. CDRs record a wealth of data that can help police determine how a crash occurred and who was responsible.

The bottom line is that their findings cannot be wrong or incomplete. They need to hold up if challenged in court.

"This is probably the most rewarding thing you can do, to find closure for families involved in these cases," Catania said.

Some of the officers spoke about why they joined the team.

“”Especially being in patrol, it lets you get involved in higher investigations," Newington Officer

Rocky Hill Lt. Robert Catania and Newington Sgt. John Zematis are the commanders of the five-town Mid-State Accident Reconstruction Squad.

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> **“We have advanced photography equipment. We’ve been using a lot more video.”**
>
> **Rocky Hill Lt. Robert Catania**

Matthew D’Esposito said. “It’s kind of interesting how we can rebuild something. We might not get to the scene until an hour after the accident occurred.”

Motor vehicle crashes are also a rare area in which police testimony and expertise can become an important ingredient of a civil trial in which one party is seeking financial compensation from the other.

In their normal capacity, officers usually become involved in criminal cases, not civil matters.

D’Esposito enjoys doing this kind of deeper case work. He added that the unit trains with similar teams in Bristol and East Hartford.

Rocky Hill Officer Jeffrey Foss-Rugan’s father was killed by a drunken driver, so he brings that perspective to his work.

Whether the cause of a crash was drinking or something else, he understands the importance to families of knowing what happened and why.

“I’ve been on the other side as a family member. It’s nice to give closure to the families,” he said. “You forge a relationship with some of the victim’s families.”

They also have developed solid teamwork with the fire departments in each town. That’s important because firefighters are also called to crash scenes and sometimes need to cut victims out of crushed vehicles.

“We’ve forged a good relationship with our fire departments,” Foss-Rugan said.

“I was in patrol when the unit was first formed,” Rocky Hill Det. Peter Vantaras said. “It lets you do a full investigation, from beginning to end.”

He enjoys the team aspect and how working with officers from other towns builds relationships.

“It fascinated me how much you can put the vehicle back together,” Officer Ryan Gould of Berlin said.

He also likes the evidence aspect of the work. Gould has been a police officer for 15 years, but only recently joined the team. He has enjoyed attending the training programs and learning the technical skills needed for this squad.

The most important thing for this investigative team, as he sees it, is to determine the cause of the crash. The answer may not always be obvious.

“We’ve worked a lot of pedestrian crashes and sometimes the driver did nothing wrong,” Gould said. “There’s far more scrutiny than anything else we do in law enforcement.”

Foss-Rugan said it is easy to charge a driver who clearly made a poor or reckless decision. But charging someone who may have only displayed a slight lack of judgment is more difficult.

The Mid-State Accident Reconstruction Squad has proved so successful that the same five towns formed a major crime unit to investigate serious crimes other than homicides; the State Police has a specially trained unit to handle those crimes. Once again, pooling specially trained resources improves productivity and saves money.

“I can’t speak more highly of the regional teams,” Cetran, the Wethersfield chief, said. “We can now apply what we learned from the mid-state traffic squad to other areas.”

He would like to see a third such team formed, this one trained to cope with incidents of mass civil disobedience.

Catania is particularly proud of the fact that no one has ever asked to leave the accident reconstruction unit. Those who moved on only did so because they were promoted to higher ranks in their departments.

“This is a huge commitment. They have to want to be here,” he said. **NL**

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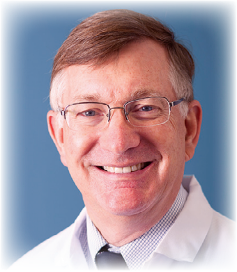
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Modern Barber shop is now under new ownership

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

The name of the business may be Modern Barber, but stepping into the shop is like taking a step back in time.

"It's been a landmark since 1931," said new owner Heath Long. "Joe Mazzoccoli passed the torch and I'm going to keep the barbershop going."

Modern Barber opened under his new ownership on June 17, but Long is not new to the establishment. He worked at the shop for nearly 10 years from 2004 to 2014 and is happy to be back in the spot that helped with his training.

"This was a good opportunity for me," he said.

The barbershop is a throwback to an older time, offering men's haircuts in a relaxed environment of experienced barbers. Long said he has been cutting hair since he was 21 years old and learned through hands-on experience.

"When I first got out of barber school, I went to the old barbershop where I went because I heard he needed help," he said. "He was known for doing flat tops, which is one of the hardest haircuts to do."

Shortly after working there, his boss and mentor became seriously ill and left the care of the shop to the new barber.

"I was thrown right into the lion's den," Long said.

Now with so much experience behind him, he is proud to be the new owner of Modern Barber and bring with him the expertise he has cultivated.

Other staff are part-time barber Tony Dibiasi and barber-in-training Tina Karas.

"It's hard to find barbers these days," Long said. "We've got a good group here."

Along with men's haircuts, Modern Barber offers cuts for boys and teenagers as well. The Newington resident said his favorite time of year to be a

MODERN BARBER

Photos by Allie Rivera

Heath Long, the new owner of Modern Barber, kept the establishment with its vintage barbershop feel.

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> **“The people are loyal in Newington and that’s what makes Newington great.”**
>
> **Heath Long**

barber is prom season.

“I love making the kids look really good and getting to talk to them,” he said.

Providing a place where customers can feel comfortable is one of the key aspects of his new business.

“A lot of people know me because I’ve been here before,” he said. “People can come in here and we can talk about anything you want.”

Some topics that often come up are two of his great loves, boxing and the Chicago Bears football team. Long is glad to be back working in the town where he has lived for years with his wife and two children, and he hopes to be able to give back by sponsoring a sports team in the coming years.

“I love that I get to raise my kids in a town where everybody knows us,” he said.

With the rebirth of Modern Barber, he is hopeful that the people of Newington will embrace him and the shop in the same way that they have embraced him in the past.

“That’s the thing about Newington – everybody’s willing to help you out,” he said. “The people are loyal in Newington and that’s what makes Newington great.”

Long said he hopes that with the new ownership, people will check out the shop and give him a chance to provide excellent service.

“When you come here, you know you’re going to get a great haircut and a great conversation,” he said. **NL**

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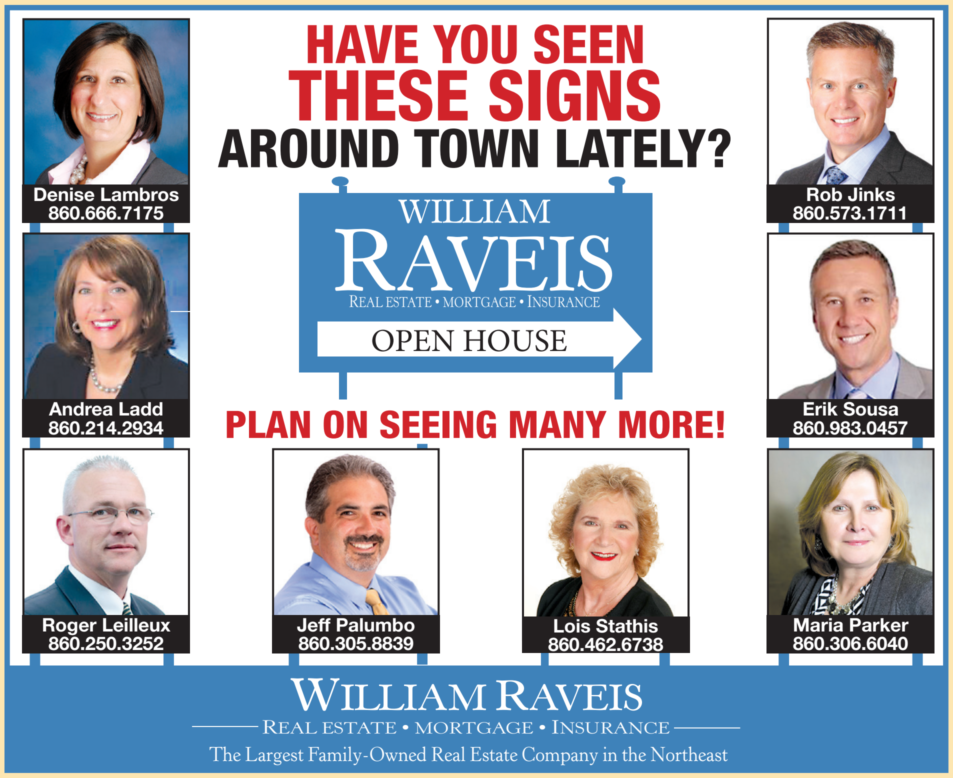

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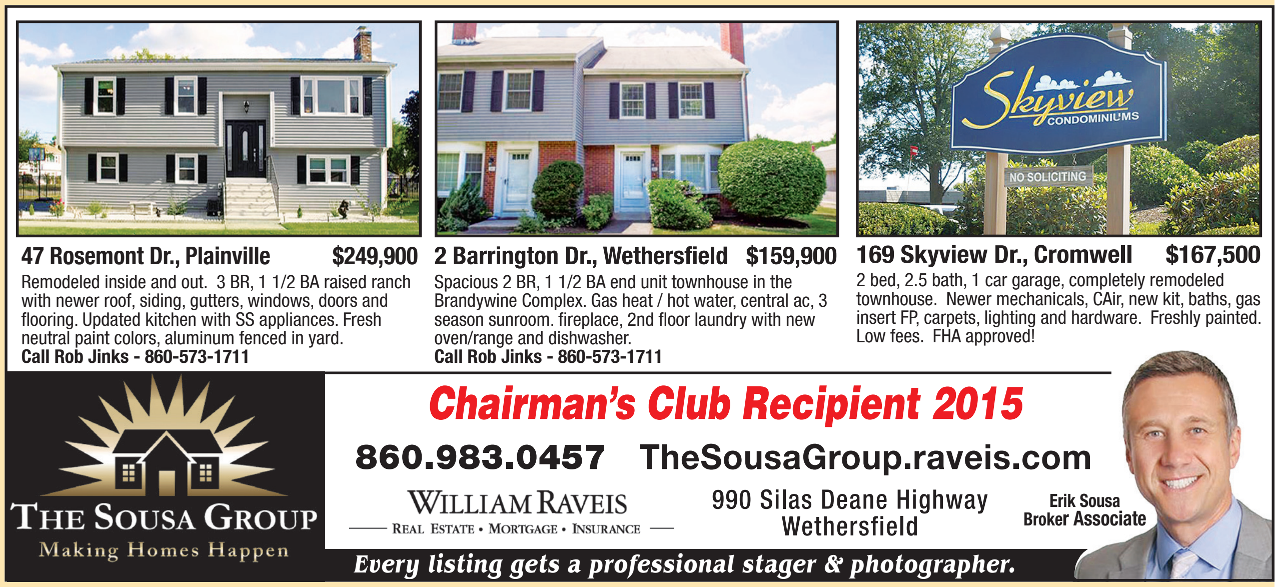

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Blessing all God's creatures

1. A shy sugar glider eyes a banana snack. **2.** Melissa Haseley feels the shell (which is actually bone) of a turtle. **3.** Lorraine Belyea shows that White's tree frogs can be friendly visitors on a human hand. **4.** Paul Crosthwaite meets a bunny. **5.** Animal Embassy founder and Director Chris Evers introduces the audience to a green iguana named Forest. **6.** Father David Parachini pets the soft fur coat of a chinchilla. **7.** Elizabeth Gallagher, 10, holds a White's tree frog, which hails from Australia. **8.** Grace Episcopal Church Deacon C.J. Puskarz blesses Chelsea Belyea's 4-year-old feline friend named Kitty. **9.** Mayor Roy Zartarian is a noted butterfly expert who spoke about the species of butterflies that call Newington their home during parts of the year. **10.** The Rev. David Parachini blesses a Maltipoo pup named Tobie who is owned by church Acolyte Karen Halpert.

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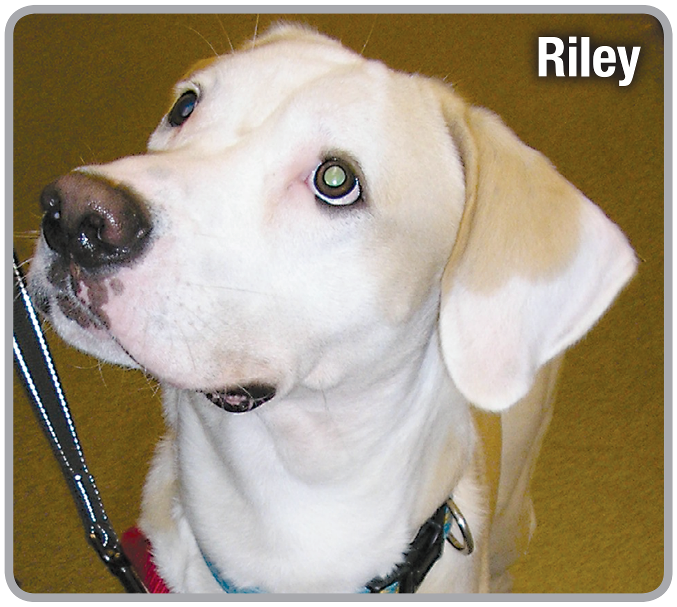
a new leash on LIFE



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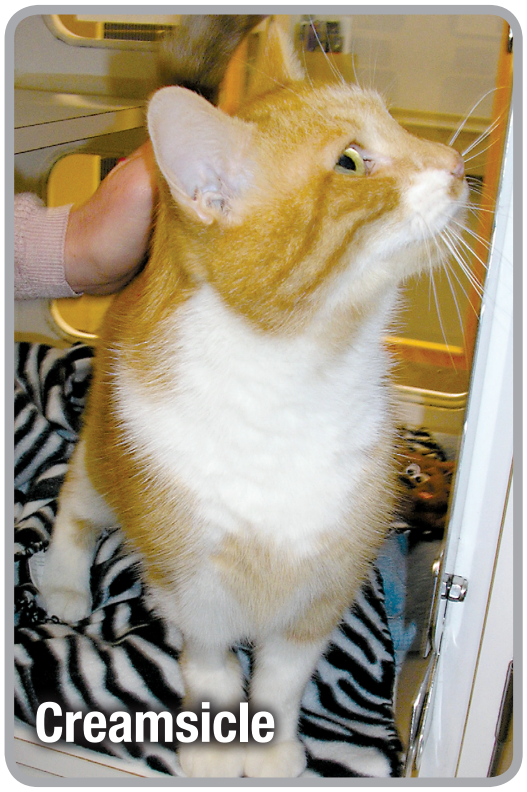
Creamsicle is a 10-year-old male domestic shorthair. He still has a decent amount of energy and is fine with children. But he wants nothing to do with other cats or dogs. His ideal home would be one where he is the only pet and gets to spend all of his time indoors.

Riley is a 1-year-old male Boxer and Labrador retriever mix. A real sweetheart, he would thrive in a single-family home with children who are 15 or older. He has no prior experience with other pets in the house but is willing to give it a try. He is a high energy dog and needs daily exercise. The best home for him would be with a family that has prior large dog experience.



Inquiries about adoption may be made at the Connecticut Humane Society, 701 Russell Road, Newington. Call 860-594-4500. More information, including videos, can be found online at cthumane.org. Click on "Adopt" and "Newington." The Connecticut Humane Society is a private organization and has no time limits for adoption.

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Enhancing education

Newington Education Foundation provides grants to teachers

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

When Frederic Googel, Gail Kelly and Muriel Scoler each completed their time as chairman of the Board of Education, they didn't want to stop helping the schools in the district. So the trio decided to found the Newington Education Foundation.

"We just thought as past chairmen, it was a good thing to do," Googel said. "We thought it was a nice way to help the teachers and help the students."

The Newington Education Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization with a seven-person board of directors that aims to benefit students in town by giving grants to teachers.

"We are a group that fund raises in order to give grants to teachers for the classroom," Googel, who has served as the president since 1996, said.

The organization is completely separate from the Board of Education, but it does have a liaison who maintains contact between the two groups. As a nonprofit, NEF provides mini-grants to teachers who apply for specific projects and experiences within the classroom that are not funded by taxpayers through the education portion of the municipal budget.

"Our main goal is to enhance the educational process in the public schools in town," Kelly said.

"It has to be approved by the building principal or the superintendent's office that, number one, it's going to be something that's compatible with the age group or subject that the person teaches, and it has to be something that's not a budgetary item."

Throughout the year, teachers can submit grant proposals for activities or supplies they feel would enhance their classroom. The foundation formed a committee that goes through these applications twice each year and decides how to disburse the funds.

"It has to be something that will enhance the program, not something instead of what the budget pays for," Kelly said.

"We try to look over the projects and see what can benefit the most students," Googel added.

He contended that their organization is unique in the ways by which it helps cover a wide variety of topics and monetary amounts, ranging this past year from a $94 grant for education math apps at Elizabeth Green School up to a $929 grant for materials to integrate a mindfulness program at John Paterson School.

Also awarded this past November were a $500 grant at the high school for 27 students to participate in a session with Broadway performers, a $538 grant for a Young Producers Program at both middle schools, and a $350 grant for the Kind Kids Club Project at Anna Reynolds School, among others.

Altogether, the grants provided between November 2014 and November 2015 totaled more than $7,000.

> **"We see the value in giving the grants to the teachers directly for these projects."**
>
> **Frederic Googel**

"I think they're all very valuable," Googel said. "We see the value in giving the grants to the teachers directly for these projects."

In addition to providing mini-grants to teachers, the foundation also hosts a yearly spelling bee for children in grades 3-6.

"We do it as a service to the school system and the students in town and, under the rules, it's open to any student in a Newington school or a resident of Newington; in other words, it could be residents of town who go to school outside of town for any number of reasons," Kelly said.

"The kids get prizes. We solicit some of the businesses for little things so that everybody who participates gets a little bag and the top three at each of the bees get gift cards."

In order to make the grant giving and spelling bee happen, the foundation spends a great deal of time throughout the year raising money. Along with sending direct mail appeals to local homes, it also sells afghan blankets depicting historic places in town.

"That's a great way people can contribute," Googel said.

All proceeds from the afghan sales go directly to the foundation.

Some of the fund raising is actually done by the teachers. According to Googel, they have the option of donating a small piece from each paycheck to the foundation, and he was happy to find that many choose to do so.

"A lot of teachers give a little bit of money each paycheck," he said. "It's nice that the teachers themselves see the value in it."

Both Googel and Kelly said the foundation is always looking for more supporters, either through financial contributions, or by joining the team.

"We'd love to see more people get involved," Googel said. "We're always looking for new ideas." **NL**

For more information, or to donate to the Newington Education Foundation, visit newingtonef.org or email newingtonef@gmail.com.

Student of the month

Robert Ciaffaglione has passion for playing music

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

When 17-year-old Robert Ciaffaglione speaks about music, his passion for the subject is palpable.

"Music is everything. It brings out a side of you that people don't look for, but it's there," he said. "It's kind of hard to explain, but music is kind of an outlet for me – different genres of music, different feelings. It's a very emotional subject and it keeps inspiring me."

A senior at Newington High School, Robert has been playing the trumpet for the past eight years, during which he was selected for multiple local and national ensembles. Within the school, he is part of the band as well as the wind ensemble, one of two groups geared toward older music students.

"Both ensembles are involved in the marching band, then after that season we shift into concert music," Robert said.

As he plays in the wind ensemble, he and his fellow musicians learn about the music and its history.

"Every step of the way, we're learning more about music itself, and not just rhythm and chords, but why we play music," he said. "We learn about different artists and composers."

It was last year in the NHS wind ensemble that Robert had the chance to play one of his favorite pieces, "Fandango" by Joseph Turrin. The music featured a solo trombone player along with Robert playing solo trumpet.

"That piece is a constant communication between the trumpet, the trombone and the ensemble," Robert said. "It was just one of those things where we all worked together to create it."

That team aspect is one of the things that has made him continue to play.

"You're always going to have those people who are there to try to outshine everyone else, but in the end, music is about what you contribute and how it plays into what everybody else is there for," he said.

Photos by Allie Rivera

Robert Ciaffaglione, a senior at Newington High School, is a dedicated musician who plays trumpet in both the school's wind ensemble and two ensembles through the Hartt Community Division.

He continues his studies in music by taking an Advanced Placement course in music theory, a college-level class that focuses on chord structures, rhythm and pitch.

Outside of school, Robert's passion for playing the trumpet has led him to the Hartt School Community Division, where he plays in both the Greater Hartford Youth Wind Ensemble and the Connecticut Youth Symphony after auditioning in May of his freshman year.

"Those programs are designed for high school musicians," he said. "It's helping to develop more ensemble experience."

He loves participating in the music program at NHS and the two groups at Hartt give him the opportunity to play with other like-minded musicians whose primary focus is music.

"I think it's great that students are able to do music and sports and anything else they want to do, but music is always going to be my top commitment," Robert said. "Being able to share that with others who share that as a top priority is nice."

In the two ensembles at Hartt, he has been able to work with top directors.

"The conductors are among the best in the nation," he said. "Though I have to add the music program here in Newington is also among the best in the country."

Robert is grateful to his teachers, especially Newington High's Stephen Brookes, Martin Kellogg Middle School's Ken Bell and Brian Kelly, music program leader for Newington Public Schools, in addition to trumpet teacher Dave Negri.

According to Libby Greenblatt, a social worker at NHS, it is not uncommon for Robert to thank others for the success he has achieved.

"He's so successful, but he's so humble," she said. "Just speaking to him, you would never know all that he has achieved, or that he's a nationally ranked trumpet player."

Greenblatt said that in addition to Robert's hard work as a musician, it is his kindness and positive demeanor that truly set him apart from his peers.

"He is so resilient, he is so respectful of staff, of his peers, he is diplomatic and genuine in his interactions with people," she said. "I just can't say enough about him. He's a wonderful, awesome kid."

Acknowledging those who have helped him along the way is an important action that Robert feels everyone should do.

"I think the most important part about being a student, no matter if it's music or sports or theater or whatever you're involved in, what makes it fun is the others around you, not just the students, but the teachers," he said. "I'm very grateful that I've had so much support from everybody." **NL**

Twelve-year-olds Rebecca Fisher and Shiven Patel use the technology in John Wallace Middle School's new studio.

LIFE in the classroom

Middle school technology studio is expanding

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

In a classroom at John Wallace Middle School sits a long desk with two wooden and cloth director's chairs behind it. "JWTV" is embroidered on the red fabric that stands out against the bright green background.

A small camera points at the scene, connected by long wires to a set of computers where producers can overlook the production. On the other side of the room are stacks of gray tables and overturned chairs waiting for use, sitting as a stark contrast to the first side's potential for action.

The room, which formerly served as the STEM classroom before that program was moved into the school's new addition, did not have an intended purpose as the school year was starting until technology education teacher Don Vallera came forward.

"I approached [Principal] Dave [Milardo] and said this may be a great spot for the new JWTV space," Vallera said.

John Wallace TV, the burgeoning studio Vallera is working to create, began producing daily video announcements for the school in

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John Wallace Middle School students, from left, Dylan Correll, 11, Isack Gomes, 11, and Marlon Mitusina, 12, are part of a group of students who will be providing further technical support to their classmates and teachers through the school's expanding technology education program.

recent years. But until now its studio space was in constant flux.

Two years ago it was in a small room next to Vallera's classroom, but that space is now additional classroom space. Last year, JWTV broadcast from the staff cafeteria.

"It always had people coming in and out, plus it's on the other side of the building," Vallera said. "I wasn't able to send kids there to work on projects because I couldn't be there and in my classroom at the same time."

When the former STEM room became available, he immediately had ideas of how he could utilize the space.

"I don't even need the whole room," he recalled telling Milardo.

Vallera said the space is still a work in progress, but he has already brought in some updated equipment, including a flycam and some semi-professional video cameras.

"It gives kids the ability to expand their skills in these areas," he said. "I want to expand further and start having them also do podcasts and webinars."

In addition to the changes to the morning announcement videos, Vallera is excited to expand tech opportunities for students who are interested in and proficient with computers. He is in the process of creating a tech help desk, where selected students with especially high skills can help other pupils and teachers in the building with any computer problems they may have.

"We will have our own students on staff to help the teachers with technology integration," Vallera said.

For the first year, he sought out students from his technology classes who showed a particular interest or skill.

"It's going to be interesting to see how it's going to unfold," he said. "I'm sure once this really rolls out and gets moving, there will be a lot of word of mouth to get more interest."

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In addition to running tech support, he wants the students to also proactively get information out to the school through blogs and podcasts.

"This is what tech people do," he said. "They don't just sit and hide behind a computer. They get the message out through blogging or video."

The tech help desk, which at press time was still in the process of being set up, will run in conjunction with the school store in an area to be called Wallace Market Commons. Tech support students will practice working with others both through the help desk and store sales.

"Our number-one focus there is customer satisfaction," Vallera said. "The goal was to get an area where students or staff can go with questions about technology or to buy little trinkets."

These special projects not only provide creative outlets to the students but also help to prepare them for college and working in various careers, he said.

"Newington's mission is to make every student college, career and citizenship ready, and these real-life experiences lead to that," he added.

A large piece of the work that happens both in Vallera's classroom and in the tech projects such as the help desk and the JWTV studio is collaboration, which he contended is key to succeeding in any field.

> **"I want to expand further and start having them also do podcasts and webinars."**
>
> **Don Vallera**

"In school, it's really about what you did, how are you performing, but this has that collaboration piece," he said. "Any time that we can provide an opportunity for kids to understand a real-life collaboration, that's invaluable. It's something you can't teach out of a textbook."

Those real-world skills are already apparent to those who have already begun participating in the various tech outlets,.

"You learn how to have the social skills that you would need in a job like this and you need all these skills in the future," 12-year-old Marlon Mitusina said.

Students who are involved in this opportunity do so as volunteers.

"We do this on our own, not because anyone says we have to," Rebecca Fisher, 12, said. "I like to help people and it sounds like a lot of fun."

In addition to the positive experiences, Vallera said this extended tech program is also useful to teach them how to be global citizens in an online world.

"How do we get kids to self-monitor their use of technology?" Vallera asked. "The idea is not to be punitive and say, 'we're taking it away.' The idea is to be proactive and say, 'this is the proper way to use this technology.'"

Though much of these programs are just in their beginning stages, he is excited to see all that his students can accomplish going forward and is grateful to the entire community for creating a culture that fosters these types of programs.

"If we're building a solid educational experience in town, it pays off down the road," Vallera said, noting the number of former students who have returned to the town to teach. "The success of a lot of this has to do with the town's support." **NL**

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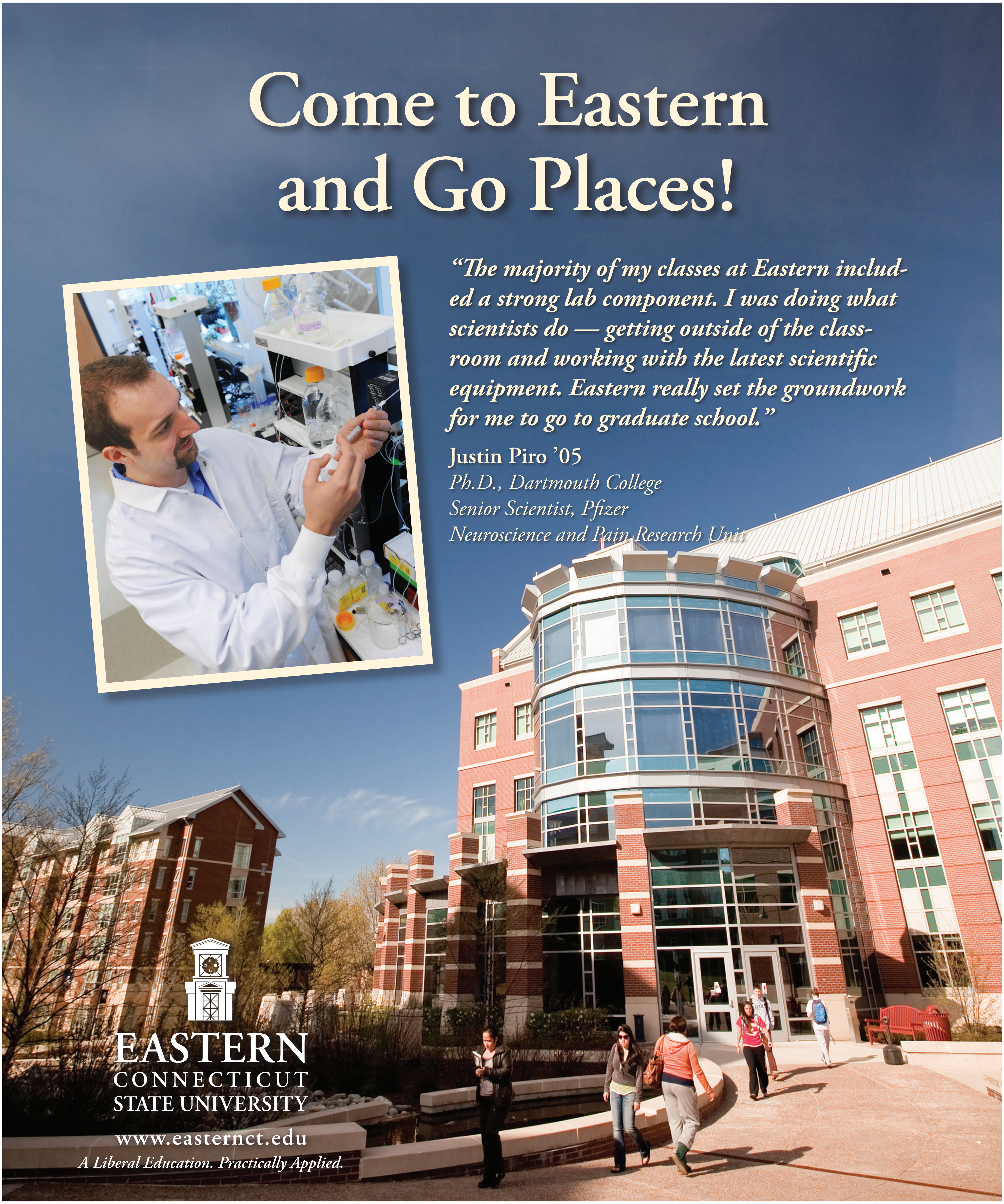

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November calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

1 Parent–Child Workshop, 10:15 a.m., for children ages 1-3 and their parents, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also Nov. 8

1 Movers and Shakers: A Musical Storytime, noon, for ages 2-4 and a caregiver, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

2 Strapped into an American Dream, 6:30 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

2 Evening Book Discussion, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

3 Tech 4 U, 5:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

3 Family Storytime, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also Nov. 10 and 17

4 Family Fletcher Fun Night, 6:30 p.m., for grade 2 and older, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

4 Paint Night Fundraiser to benefit Family Promise and Homelessness, 7 p.m., Grace Episcopal Church parish hall, 124 Maple Hill Ave., register at paintsipfun.com.

7 Parent–Child Workshop, 6 p.m., for children ages 1-3 and their parents, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also Nov. 14

7 The Joy of Coloring: An Adult Coloring Group, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also 10 a.m. Nov. 22

8 Teen Volunteer Meeting, noon, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

8 National Alliance on Mental Illness, 7 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-205-9542 or 860-830-2129

8 LEGO Junior Makerspace, 1 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, newingtonct.gov/library

9 Junior Cookbook Club, 6:30 p.m., for grades K-2, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

9 Veteran's Benefits, 6:30 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

10 Word 2013 Basics, 10:30 a.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

10 MS Support Group, noon to 2 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-667-1314 or 860-236-2751

10 Cozytime Stories, 4 p.m., for grades K-2, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

10 Tech Troubleshooting with Teens, 6:30 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also 1:30 p.m. Nov. 29

10 Psoriasis Support Group, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 860-888-6669

12 Diamonds in the Ruff to support the Connecticut Humane Society, 6 p.m., Hartford Marriott-Farmington, cthumane.org

15 Play with Us, 10:15 a.m., for families with young children who have special needs, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also Nov. 22 and 29

15 Movies and More: "The Meddler," 1 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

15 Stories and Art, noon, for ages 2-4 and a caregiver, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

15 Half-Day Fun, 2:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also Nov. 29

16 Just a Story and a Song, 10:15 a.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also Nov. 23 and 30

16 Chess Club, 4 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

16 Cookbook Club, 6:30 p.m., for grades 3-6, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

17 Tales to Tails, 4:30 p.m., read to a certified therapy dog, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also 1 p.m. Nov. 19

17 Word 2013 Intermediate, 6:30 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

18 Fall Book Sale, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library, also 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Nov. 19 and noon to 3 p.m. Nov. 20

21 Teen Advisory Board, 6:30 p.m., for ages 13-18, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

22 GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club, 6:30 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-666-4371

25 Casey Carle's BubbleMania, 1 p.m., for ages 5 and older, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

26 Construction Club, 1 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

News roundup

1
ANNA M. REYNOLDS
SCHOOL
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Anna Reynolds is tops

1. The U.S. Department of Education has named Anna Reynolds School a 2016 National Blue Ribbon School. Anna Reynolds is among 279 public and 50 private schools receiving this honor this year. It is being recognized as a school with exemplary high performance, meaning it must be in the top 15 percent of all schools in the state in reading or English language arts and mathematics.

Principal Jason Smith, former principal Jeremy Visone, first grade teacher Carol Duggan and Superintendent of Schools William Collins will represent the school at a two-day awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Helping the shelters

The Connecticut Humane Society is participating in the second annual Bayer Animal Health Share for Shelters campaign, running through Nov. 14. Share for Shelters is a social media-driven campaign that highlights the bond between people and their dogs and cats through the sharing of images, while at the same time benefitting shelters and rescues.

This year's campaign will directly benefit 26 Bayer shelter partners nationwide. Participating shelters will encourage people to share photos showing their love for pets using the #ShareforShelters on social media. Bayer is awarding money totaling up to $30,000 to three participating shelters based upon the number of photos shared through the campaign.

Kellogg teacher honored

2. Sanford Pilz, a physical education and wellness teacher at Martin Kellogg Middle School, received the Middle School Physical Education Teacher of the Year Award from the Connecticut Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. Currently in his 39th year in education, he has served at Martin Kellogg for the past 25 years.

Throughout his long career, he has experienced many changes in his profession, as well as his own professional development. The changing of the curriculum from a sport-based one to a fitness and wellness-based approach has been the most notable change.

Instead of teaching basketball or baseball, the focus is now on weight training, the importance of diet and exercise, stress management and overall wellness for a fit and happy life. Pilz strives to give his students lifelong skills and opportunities that will benefit them after they graduate from high school.

Middle schools honored

Project Tomorrow, a national education nonprofit group, selected Martin Kellogg Middle School and John Wallace Middle School as Speak Up Loud and Clear schools. Formerly known as Speak Up 200, this designation is a collection of the top K-12 schools across the country that encourage and involve authentic student, parent, and teacher ideas and views in education planning and decision making.

Newington's two middle schools received this national distinction from the 35,000 schools nationwide that have participated in the annual Speak Up surveys since 2003. Newington Public Schools has the honor of having two of the four schools in Connecticut to receive this award.

NEWINGTON DEPARTMENT
HUMAN SERVICES
3

Kiwanis aids human services

3. Newington Kiwanis Club Secretary Dr. Ellen Leonard presents a $1,000 check to Carol Labrecque, left, and Director Karen Futoma, right, of the town Human Services Department. This donation was made possible by admission proceeds from those who attend the club's Big K Flea Market and Craft Fair.

The Big K Flea Market's last day for the fall season is Oct. 30 and it often plays host to 70 or more vendors. It will return for another 10 weeks in the spring.

Operating hours are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Cleaning the park

4. Newington Cub Scout Pack 347, Bear Den 5, and their siblings hiked and completed their community service project by picking up trash at Churchill Park. The Bears, along with their leaders, are hoping that people and animals are enjoying the Churchill walking trails more now that they are cleaner and safer.

AARP tax aides sought

The AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program is looking for local volunteers for its tax preparation program. They are asked to give a few hours each week during the tax season to help low-income and moderate-income taxpayers prepare and file their federal and state tax returns, ensuring that they receive the tax credits and deductions they deserve.

There are a variety of jobs including greeters, counselors and electronic return originators. Training is provided. To learn more, or to register as a volunteer, visit aarp.org/taxaide. **NL**

4

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Photo by Mark Jahne

Robert Prentis stays active by volunteering

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Robert Prentis is 75 years old, but to him age is just a number. He has occasional health issues like everyone else, but stays young at heart by keeping active.

Prentis, who lived in town for 35 years before moving to Rocky Hill two years ago, remains involved as an active volunteer for the Newington Department of Human Services and its food pantry. He was born in Queens, N.Y., and moved here for work in 1979.

"I'm a civil engineer and I've been in construction-related

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> **"I enjoy giving back to the town. The town has been good to me."**
>
> **Robert Prentis**

industries my whole life. I actually worked on the World Trade Center. I retired in July of 2012," he said.

He enjoys hitting the links at Stanley Golf Course in New Britain and working around the house. When he first started volunteering with the food pantry he only did so during the winter holiday season.

"In 2015, I decided to volunteer the entire year," he said. "Last year I spent over 200 hours volunteering."

It became a weekly commitment with hours added on as the holidays approached.

"I enjoy giving back to the town. The town has been good to me. Life has been good to me. There's a need in Newington and it has grown over the years," Prentis said.

He likes the town and praised its government services and especially the senior and disabled center. Most of his work at the food pantry takes place in the storage area or stocking the room where clients come to pick up their items.

Prentis said he enjoys working with Human Services Director Karen Futoma, her staff and the other volunteers. He started out working alone but now has other folks helping out.

In addition to his work in the food pantry, located in town hall, he also goes out to local supermarkets to pick up donations that are collected at the stores. He's glad to do anything possible to help those in need of nutrition.

"We have a person who delivers food to people who are housebound," Prentis said.

He and his wife Patricia both like to walk. They also enjoy historic lectures and dining out. They have a condominium in Charlestown, R.I., that serves as a summer home and provides them with the opportunity to do their walking on the beach.

"We love to walk, Old Wethersfield in particular, because of the history there," he said. "I enjoy reading, in particular history and biography."

The couple has two grown sons and still visits New York on occasion to see relatives.

Prentis said he continues to benefit from general good health and a good life.

"Bob has been with us now for four years. He took right to the whole process of organizing the food that comes in," Carol Labrecque, town human services coordinator, said.

She called Prentis highly organized, a good leader and someone who works well both independently and with others.

"We totally appreciate that kind of assistance. He's just been a godsend to us," she said. **NL**

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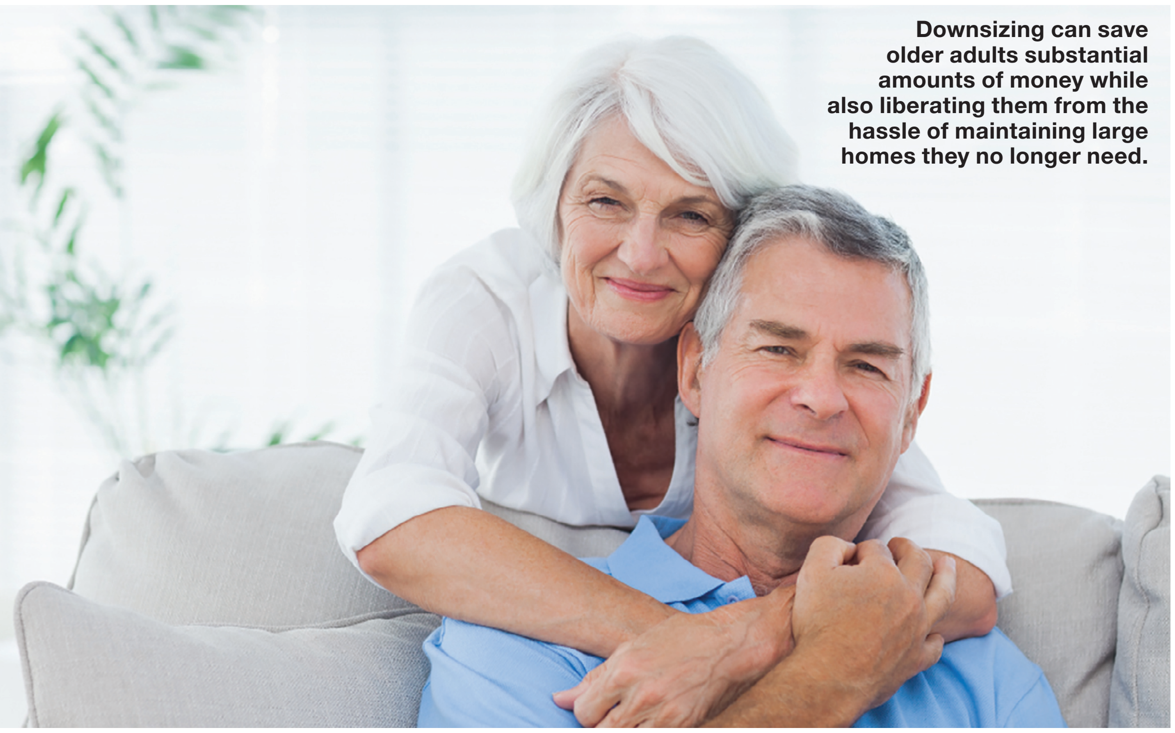


Downsizing can save older adults substantial amounts of money while also liberating them from the hassle of maintaining large homes they no longer need.

How to determine if downsizing is for you

As men and women retire or approach retirement age, many opt to downsize their homes. Such a decision can save older adults substantial amounts of money while also liberating them from the hassle of maintaining large homes they no longer need.

Downsizing to smaller homes or apartments is a significant step, one that homeowners should give ample consideration before making their final decisions. The following are a handful of tips to help homeowners determine if downsizing to smaller homes is the right move.

- **Get a grip on the real estate market.** Downsizing is not solely about money, but it's important that homeowners consider the real estate market before putting their homes up for sale. Speak with a local realtor or your financial advisor about the current state of your real estate market. Downsizing can help homeowners save money on utilities, taxes and mortgage payments, but those savings may be negated if you sell your house in a buyer's market instead of a seller's market. If you think the current market won't get you the price you are hoping for, delay your downsize until the market rebounds.

- **Take inventory of what's in your house.** Empty nesters often find that their homes are still filled with their children's possessions, even long after those children have entered adulthood and left home. If the storage in your home is dominated by items that belong to your children and not you, then downsizing might be right for you. Tell your children you are thinking of downsizing and invite them over to pick through any items still in your home. Once they have done so and taken what they want, you can host a yard sale, ultimately donating or discarding what you cannot sell. Once all of the items are gone, you may realize that moving into a smaller place is the financially prudent decision.

- **Examine your own items as well.** Your children's items are likely not the only items taking up space in your home. Take inventory of your own possessions as well, making note of items you can live without and those you want to keep. If the list of items you can live without is extensive, then you probably won't have a problem moving into a smaller home. If you aren't quite ready to say goodbye to many of your possessions, then you might benefit from staying put for a little while longer.

- **Consider your retirement lifestyle.** If you have already retired or on the verge of retirement and plan to spend lots of time traveling, then downsizing to a smaller home may free up money you can spend on trips. And if you really do see yourself as a silver-haired jetsetter, then you likely won't miss your current home because you won't be home frequently enough to enjoy it. If travel is not high on your retirement to-do list but you have a hobby, such as crafting, restoring classic cars or woodworking, that you hope to turn into a second profession, then you might benefit from staying put and converting your existing space into a workshop.

Many retirees downsize their homes, but this decision requires careful consideration of a variety of factors. **NL**

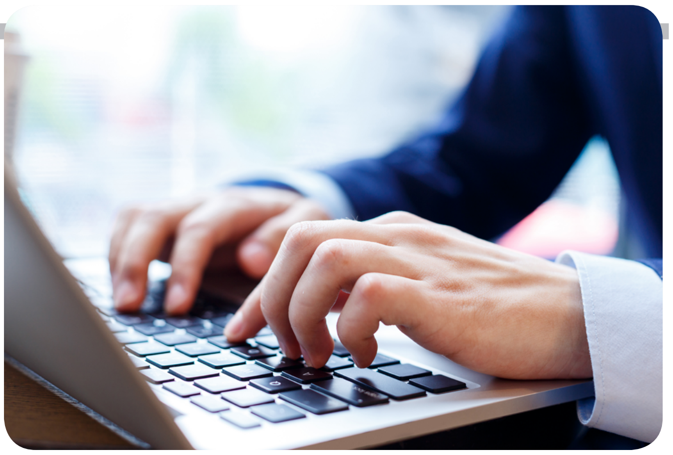
People notes

Yvonne Corneau received a letter of commendation from the U.S. Navy for sponsoring four sailors in the Bogies for the Brave Charity Golf Tournament. The sailors were granted a day off from active duty to play golf and help raise $7,000 for critically injured members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Nicole Garcia, a student at Eastern Connecticut State University, served as a teaching assistant during a three-week Summer Arts Institute for juniors and seniors from Windham High School and Arts at the Capitol Theatre. She also worked a paid fellowship on campus this summer, designing sets for the production of "Two Gentlemen of Verona," a Shakespearean rock musical.

Roger Levesque traveled to Washington, D.C., on behalf of the American Cancer Society to meet with U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy and aides to Sen. Richard Blumenthal and U.S. Reps. John Larson and Joe Courtney to discuss the need to support an increase in federal funding for cancer research. He also asked them to advance legislation that works to improve patients' quality of life and to support legislation that would close a loophole in Medicare that often results in surprise costs for senior citizens when a polyp is found during a routine colonoscopy. **NL**

Business Notes



Newington Memorial Funeral Home was one of eight funeral homes in the state honored by the National Funeral Directors Association with a 2016 Pursuit of Excellence Award.

This award is presented annually to firms that have demonstrated a commitment to raising the bar on funeral service excellence by adhering to strict ethical and professional standards and providing outstanding service to families and communities. **NL**

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Working for a better future

Philanthropist Ilka Torres lives her ideals

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Ilka Torres's early years gave no indication of the success to come. She moved to Connecticut from Puerto Rico when she was a child with her mother and a younger sister and brother; two other children stayed on the island with her father.

"I went to Batchelder School. I was basically raised in Hartford. We lived with an aunt for a while, then my mom got into Section 8. Our first apartment was on Washington Street in Hartford. It was convenient," Torres said.

"I got a job at McDonald's right across the street from where we lived. I'd go to Hartford High and then go to work at McDonald's. To be honest, we were poor. We did not have any money. My mom was Section 8. She took welfare and food stamps, so I had no dreams. I was just taking a day at a time," she added.

"When I was 18 and about to graduate high school, I found out I was pregnant. It was a big shock for everybody, including my mom. She was not a happy camper."

While it could have led down a different path, Torres found it a motivating factor.

"When I had my daughter, Veronica, that's when everything sort of clicked in my head. I was definitely a teenage mom," she said. "Something clicked and I thought, 'Oh my God, now I have this little person I need to take care of.'"

She decided to go back to school.

"I didn't like school. I was not a school fan, but I decided to go for a certificate in accounting, at the Morse School of Business, which no longer exists," she said.

She did an internship with the state Department of Public Health and about six months after she graduated, she was hired as a clerk in the accounts payable section of its business office.

"I was hired when I was 21 back in 1998. That same year I bought my house, a duplex in Hartford right on Wilbur Street, which I still have and rent out. I also bought my first car when I was 21, so a lot happened," Torres said.

"My mom [Rosa] never drove; she still doesn't drive. So for me to get my license was a big deal."

The house had three bedrooms and two-and-a-half baths.

"My sister came to live with me because we're all trying to run from home, to get away from my mom," she said with a laugh. "I bought it for $60,000 or so. I was lucky enough to qualify for a first-time time home-buyer program, CHFA [Connecticut Housing Finance authority]."

Buying a home sparked a new career. While Torres continued to work for the state, earning various promotions and serving in a couple of different departments through the years, she eventually decided to also pursue a career in real estate.

"After we bought our house in Glastonbury in November 2010, I started thinking of the real estate process. There's a fascination there in terms of looking at houses, helping people," she said.

After getting her license, she began working for House Everything Realty Group in East Hartford.

"They were doing a lot of short sales. That's when the market had crashed. A lot of people were living in houses they couldn't afford. We specialized in short sales," she said.

After four years she started working at RE/MAX Precision Realty in Newington, where she discovered being bilingual is a bonus.

"A lot of people speak Spanish and want an agent to speak Spanish," she noted.

Torres continues to work two full-time jobs.

"Ninety percent of my [real estate] clients work. They want to see houses after they get out of work, at 4:30, 5 o'clock. At that point I'm completely available to them," she said.

"When you find something you really love doing, you really make time for both," Torres added.

She enjoys helping people plan for buying a house.

"Single moms come to me. Their credit isn't that great and they say, 'I want to buy a house.' I like to focus on them; not a lot of Realtors do," she said.

"I like to take the time and really plan so they can get the home they deserve and their family deserves. I like to help single moms. I was one. I was lucky enough to find the passion for different things to help me grow," she added.

She went back to school and earned her bachelor's degree in accounting from Central Connecticut State University.

"[I did it] just to teach my daughter that even if you don't like to do something, you do need [to do it], like to go back to school and finish," she said.

Torres knows that she easily could have become another statistic.

"What I do know is I work very hard. Sometimes I had three jobs [with] going to school, or I'd take a part-time job whether at Marshalls or T.J. Maxx and I'd still be working for the state. I work really hard for what I believe," she said.

"Definitely my mom was a big, big help with baby-sitting. Also my partner was really a big help in pushing me to do my best and go after my dreams, finishing school, getting my real estate license. She has always been very supportive in everything I do."

Torres is also committed to giving back. While she supports a variety of causes, she's especially driven to help her community. She is a member of the Latino Endowment Fund, one of three giving circles at the Hartford Foundation for Public

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Giving, and was featured in the foundation's "I am a philanthropist" campaign.

"Giving Circles allow groups of people with the same goal of supporting the community to work together, study a topic and decide how to direct funds to support important solutions. These Giving Circles are a great way to introduce people to the Hartford Foundation, the wonderful nonprofits we work with, and other local residents who share an interest in supporting our community," Senior Communications and Marketing Officer Chris Senecal said.

"The foundation's Latino Endowment Fund is a Giving Circle that works to address the challenges facing Latino residents and the organizations that serve them."

Senecal said that since 2003 the Latino Endowment Fund, one of the first of its kind in the United States, has awarded more than $150,000 in grants to organizations serving that community. The fund is valued at more than $250,000.

"Ilka is a wonderful example of someone who truly wants to make a difference in their community and works with others to pool their collective talents and resources to improve people's lives," Deborah Rothstein, vice president of development and donor engagement, said.

"As a member of the Foundation's Latino Endowment Fund, Ilka joins other committed residents to identify and learn about issues of concern to Greater Hartford's Latino community and award grants to local nonprofits working to respond to these issues."

Torres said it's important to support these community services.

"I have always been involved in my community in giving. I like to contribute a little extra I have, whether it's in time or money," she said.

"Not too many people do it. If we don't do it for each other, if we don't support each other, I really don't see anybody else doing it. It's very important. There's a huge need for programs that help the community, whether it's education, early childhood. We need the help. Every little bit helps."

She likes the idea of her money being combined with donations from other like-minded people.

"Here, you have the foundation just piling up every little bit of money, whether it's $100 per person or $250 per person," said Torres, who has a budget for charitable giving.

There's a phrase in Spanish that encapsulates her philosophy: "En la unión está la fuerza."

"It translates that when we unite, that's where we get our strength. When we can combine all these little moneys that support the foundation, I think we have a bigger impact," she said.

"We need more. We need more support. We need more people that want to help our community and have the light to give, just to give back," she added.

"I feel that the more people that know about the foundation and start to support the foundation and small grants for the community, it's a better future we're all going to have." **NL**

Learn more about the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving at hfpg.org.

"If we don't do it for each other, if we don't support each other, I really don't see anybody else doing it."
Ilka Torres

Ilka Torres is one of the people featured in the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's "I am a philanthropist" ad campaign.

Events spotlight

Monster Mash Dance

Oct. 21, 7-10 p.m.
Mortensen Community Center
Town Hall
860-665-8666

Newington Parks and Recreation invites students in grades 7-8 to this dance in the community center's gymnasium. The fee is $5 per student along with a non-perishable food donation. Refreshments will be available for sale. Students must show their school ID at the door or a parent/guardian must be present to sign the student in. Backpacks and re-entry are not allowed.

Children's Halloween Party

Oct. 29, 1-3 p.m.
Mortensen Community Center
Town Hall
860-665-8666

Newington Parks and Recreation presents its annual Children's Halloween Party featuring a DJ, games, crafts, activities, a magician, candy and more. Participation is open to children up to grade 6 along with their parents. Children should wear costumes. Preregistration is required and the fee is $5 per child for residents and $8 for non-residents.

Fall Rummage Sale

Oct. 30, noon to 3 p.m.
Oct. 31, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Temple Sinai
41 West Hartford Road
860-561-1055

The temple's Sisterhood will hold its annual sale featuring items such as clothing, household goods, books, knickknacks and small appliances. Admission is $1 on Sunday. Monday is Bag Day, when shoppers pay one low price per full bag.

Diamonds in the Ruff

Nov. 12, 6 p.m.
Hartford Marriott-Farmington
15 Farms Spring Road
cthumane.org

The Connecticut Humane Society, with headquarters on Russell Road in Newington, presents a gala auction called "Diamonds in the Ruff." It will feature live and silent auctions, bar and food stations, music and dancing, mission trivia and a photo booth. Funds raised will support pets in CHS shelters in Newington, Waterford and Westport, as well as the Fox Memorial Clinic, a low-fee public veterinary clinic at its local facility. TV personality Heidi Voight will be inducted into the Gertrude O. Lewis Humanitarian Society. Tickets are $80 per person.

Fall Book Sale

Nov. 18-20
Newington Senior & Disabled Center
120 Cedar St.
860-665-8700 or newingtonct.gov/library

The Friends of the Library will hold their fall book sale on Friday from 5:30-8:30 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 3 p.m. All types of books will be on sale as well as CDs, audio books, DVDs, videos and specially priced items. Admission on Friday evening is $5 and free on Saturday. On Sunday, only books will be available. Buy a Friends book sale green bag for $7 and fill it with books for free. Refills are $6.

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KEITH TURLEY, Publisher

EDITORIAL
Abigail Albair, Executive Editor
aalbair@turleyct.com
Mark Jahne, Editor
Kaitlin McCallum, Assistant Editor

STAFF WRITERS
Alicia B. Smith, Allie Rivera, Mara Dresner, David Heuschkel, Sloan Brewster

ADVERTISING SALES
Alana DiMarco,
alana@turleyct.com, 860-264-5723

PAGE DESIGNERS
Daniel Kornegay, Cynthia Martel, Robert Sirois

GRAPHICS DEPARTMENT
Barbara Ouellette, Production Manager
ads@turleyct.com, 860-264-5523
Maureen LaBier, Production Assistant
Daniel Kornegay, Corley Fleming, Cynthia Martel, Kathy Kokoszka

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Editorial

It's time to cast our votes

Nov. 8 is almost here and that means voters will be flocking to the polls to cast their ballots. This is a presidential year, so the top of the ballot will offer a choice of four people seeking the highest office in the land representing the Democrat, Republican, Libertarian and Green parties.

The presidential campaign and daily bombardment of news and political talk on TV and radio feels as if it started right after the last election four years ago. It will be a welcome relief to have all of that mind-numbing blather and bombast stop, at least for a little while.

This is a historic election. The voting will either result in the first woman elected president in United States history or one of the few men with no prior political experience to capture the White House. Either way, many public opinion polls suggest that whoever wins will take office with the lowest popularity rating since those numbers have been tabulated.

While it's important to vote for president, it's also important to vote for those on the ballot who are seeking seats in the U.S. Senate and Congress, as well as the Connecticut House and Senate.

It can be argued that state legislators and the laws they enact probably have more direct impact on our lives than most of what comes out of Washington, D.C. They are the ones we turn to when we need help with local issues, when we seek funds for a new school or playground, when we have concerns about safety or transportation or other issues.

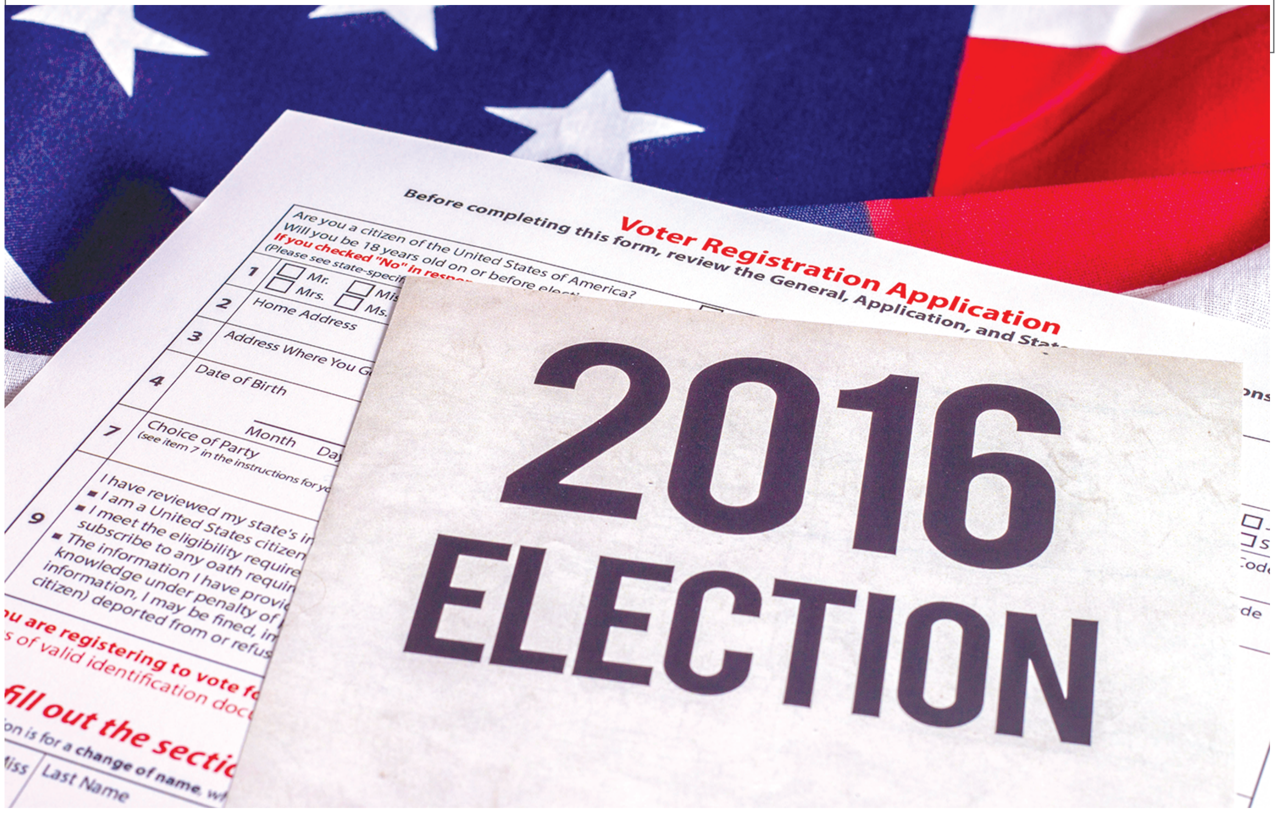
Few things in recent history have had a greater impact upon the lives of Connecticut residents than the advent of the state personal income tax in 1991. It was supposed to be part of a major overhaul of the entire taxation system in this state, not an additional tax.

Which is exactly what it turned out to be. We're still waiting for that major overhaul 25 years later. But enough about that.

Take the time to learn the names of the candidates and get a sense of where they stand on matters that are important to you. Ask them what they will do to make Connecticut and its economy better. Read their profiles in this issue and review any other campaign materials you may receive.

It's always amazing how many people can't be bothered to take five minutes to vote or exert the minimal effort that is required to secure an absentee ballot. People stand in line for hours in other countries to do what we so often take for granted.

Voting, and the private manner in which we do it, is one of the most powerful rights that Americans enjoy. It is the keystone to our democracy. Even if you don't like this year's choices, take the time and make the effort to select the next group of political leaders who will shape the future of our nation and state. **NL**



Letters to the editor

Shulman is their choice

To the Editor:

What's happening in your lives in the next few weeks, months, or years that has major repercussions? One thing is certain. We go to the polls on Nov. 8. We have a clear choice to elect Josh Shulman for state representative of Newington's 27th Assembly District.

Josh is a man who has proven time and again that he has intrinsic motivation. He is goal-oriented with a sincere passion in all he does. He always does his homework and works with facts and research to create solutions and plans. Josh can see steps in a process for a process that isn't even established yet.

Josh has always been a man beyond his years. The examples are numerous. At an extremely young age, Josh knew his future calling. He knew he'd take care of parents when they got "old."

But let's start with the present: working tirelessly for five years on our Board of Education and gaining tremendous knowledge of our town budget with its twists and turns of both the state and federal influences. He never backs away from any confrontation and has been extremely visible and transparent throughout.

Go back approximately seven years and you'll find former state representative Sandy Nafis explaining how a bill becomes a law to the seventh-grade students in Josh's Sunday school class he was teaching in Manchester. Go back 10 years and you'd see Josh collecting the data and working with the Town Council members to explain to the public what their expense would be to install air conditioning at NHS so students and staff wouldn't need to cancel school due to a "hot day."

Voting for Josh Shulman as our state representative will give us a planned future we all need.

Joanne and Larry Shulman

Supports Josh Shulman for election

To the Editor:

I can't promise to be an unbiased advocate for Josh Shulman, running for state representative in the upcoming election. I've known Josh since he was an ambitious little boy and buddy to my own son. His roots are firmly planted in this town, to all of our benefit.

What I know about Josh is that when he sets his sights on a goal, he excels at achieving it. He jumps in with both feet and immerses himself in the knowledge and skill needed to succeed and to make a difference for his community.

He's shown that to friends and family, and now greater Newington, for all of his young life. It has been good to have his voice on our Board of Education for the past five years. We have seen that he believes in maintaining the quality of education in our town and I am impressed with his vision going forward as state representative.

I kid him about his graying hair, which he is too young to carry, but it seems to reflect his seriousness in taking on the role of state representative.

Judy L. Mandel

Byron merits another term

To the Editor:

I am writing in support of state Rep. Gary Byron. In his short time in office, Gary has worked hard for the residents of Newington, always doing what is best for all of our citizens.

He has set up regular meetings and office hours, if you will, to make himself available to all. He believes in listening to those he represents so that he is doing what we all want. As a Newington Town Councilor, I have had the pleasure of working with Gary. He is always available to discuss issues and advocate for our town at the state level.

When the previous majority was in favor of Governor Malloy's transit oriented development bill, Gary listened, and at every turn, he stood strong against it. He heard what the residents were saying in person, on Facebook in editorials and he has continued to fight for local control.

He will continue to fight for Newington if given the chance. As an incumbent, he has the experience needed to continue to move the state forward and to move forward his ideas that are already in motion. Starting over with someone new just doesn't make sense when we have an incumbent as strong as Gary.

I support Gary's candidacy and urge everyone to get behind his bid for state representative so that he can continue his work at the Capitol and continue to serve and represent the residents of Newington.

Beth A. DelBuono

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

November...

In climatological terms, this month is the 3rd and final of what we call 'meteorological fall' ...here are some highlights, based on what has happened in the past.

The average low and high temperatures on the first of November are 37 and 57, respectively; by the end of the month, they drop to 29 and 46. These values are determined using Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks as the official location for record keeping (a timeframe of 3 decades is used to calculate "normal" vales for low and high temperatures).

With regard to extremes this month, the coldest temperature, since records have been kept, was 1 degree set on the 24th in 1989; conversely, the warmest temperature was 83, set on the 2nd in 1950.

November is also a month that features a big loss of daylight. From the first day of the month, with a sunrise of 7:24am and sunset of 5:44pm --- to the last, with a sunrise of 6:58am and sunset of 4:21pm... there is a loss of 58 minutes of possible daylight in 30 days!

This also is the month when we end Daylight Saving Time (DST), meaning it's time to 'fall back' ...reallocating an hour by setting our clocks back an hour, on Sunday the 6th. This is also a good time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors! **RHL**

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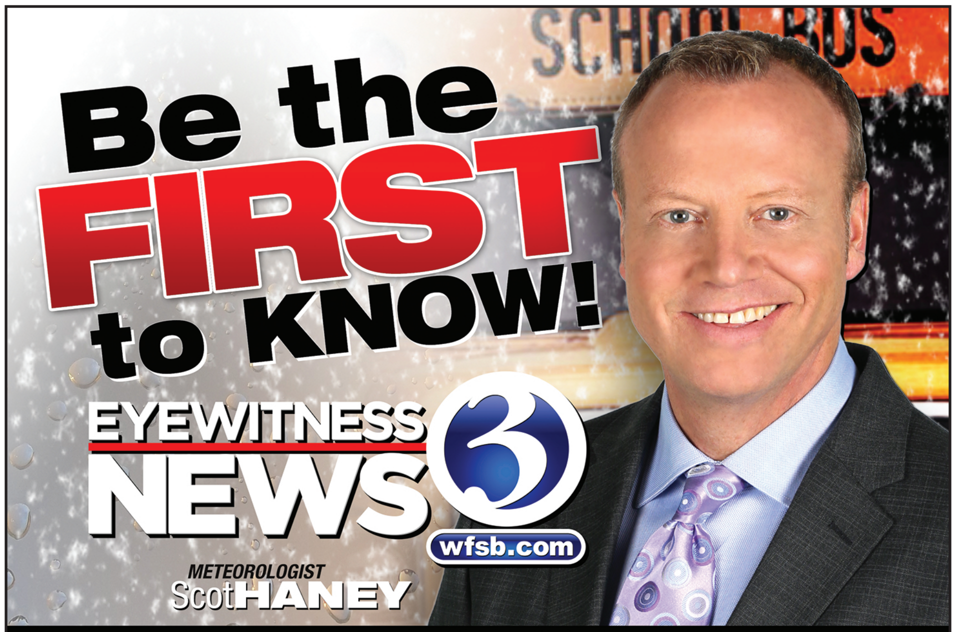

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